

400,000 pilgrims in S. Arabia for Hajj

RIYADH (AFP) — Nearly 400,000 pilgrims have arrived in Saudi Arabia for this year's annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, officials said Saturday. General Assaad Abdel Karim Freih, director general of the Saudi Passport Service, told the official SPA news agency that 371,000 pilgrims have already arrived for the Hajj, which begins on April 10. The Saudi Pilgrimage Ministry has also warned that the deadline for the arrival of pilgrims in the kingdom through land or sea borders, or at Medina airport in western Saudi Arabia, is April 4, said the agency. It added that pilgrims could continue to arrive through Jeddah airport on the Red Sea coast until April 11. Around 1.5 million pilgrims from outside the kingdom together with 500,000 Saudis are expected to take part in this year's Hajj to Mecca and Medina, Islam's two holiest shrines.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political newspaper published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة المنشورة بالمملكة الأردنية العربية

Amal claims holding Mossad 'agent'

BEIRUT (AFP) — The pro-Syrian Amal movement said Saturday it has seized an alleged Lebanese collaborator with the Israeli intelligence service Mossad from the occupied border zone of South Lebanon. But sources close to an Israeli-allied militia said the man was a school bus-driver with no links to the Mossad or to Israeli forces controlling the "security zone." An Amal statement said guerrillas captured Ibrahim Mohammad Kussam Rammal late Friday from a road near Qsair village in the border zone, in an operation which required two weeks of preparation. "This is another strike against the Mossad ... and we call on all collaborators to repent because the hand of the resistance is capable of punishment," the group said. It said Rammal collaborated for several years with the Mossad by spying on the resistance, disclosing the names of dozens of guerrillas, and warning of roadside bombs against Israeli forces in the occupied border zone.

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Regent: King's talks in U.S. are of strategic importance

Crown Prince reviews issues facing Jordan and region, approach to peace and development



By Abdullah Hasanat

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, yesterday attached strategic importance to His Majesty King Hussein's visit to the U.S. this week and said Jordan will use its pivotal role to bring about stability, peace and economic prosperity to this part of the world.

Prince told newspaper editors in a meeting at the Royal Court. "He will explain Jordan's position, so that it cannot be misunderstood, on the various issues in the Middle East and he will seek to enhance the Kingdom's pivotal role in striving for peace, stability and economic prosperity in this part of the world."

"Jordan has played a stabilizing role, especially during the recent wave of tensions in the area," the Crown Prince said. "It will continue to support, and take the initiative for, reaching comprehensive and durable peace," he added. "We stand (for setting) a new standard of human behaviour, despite all the difficulties that face us in this regard."

His Royal Highness gave as an example the King's decision to travel to Israel and personally console the families of the victims of the Baqoura attack. That visit, if looked upon positively, did succeed in absorbing the impact of the crime and ameliorating the circumstances under which it took place, the Crown Prince said. Moreover, the humanitarian approach with which we dealt with the incident, immediately after it happened, is further proof of the standards we are setting, he added.

In the meeting, which was attended by acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour and six of his new Cabinet colleagues, the Crown Prince discussed a number of issues facing Jordan, whether on the national or the regional level. He also summed up his vision of this and the next political stages which the Kingdom and the region as a whole have reached in light of the accelerating developments in the Middle East.

The Crown Prince stressed the need for national unity and taking the initiative to present it as an example for others in the region. He said that Jordanians should strive, through dialogue, to build a good measure of "political consensus" in their march towards building a civic society and a state of law.



Israel, Palestinians await U.S. move to resolve crisis

Palestinian shot dead in Ramallah

Combined agency dispatches

ISRAEL AND THE Palestinians held their breath Saturday for a new U.S. initiative in the coming days to salvage the faltering peace process.

"We expect an increased intervention by the Americans after Easter to stop the decline in the peace process," a high Israeli official who refused to be named told AFP.

Israel and the Palestinians remained at loggerheads after a one-day mission by U.S. envoy Dennis Ross on Friday aiming to defuse the crisis sparked by Israel's groundbreaking of a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Mr. Ross called for a halt to street violence which has flared in the West Bank since the start of construction of the Har Homa settlement 10 days ago, but made no mention of Palestinian demands that Israel stop the building.

A top aide to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat rejected on Saturday Israeli demands that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) crack down on violence before any resumption of stalled peace negotiations.

"We call on Israel to return to the negotiations and implement the agreements without any conditions. The new Israeli conditions are unacceptable," Nabil Abu Rdaina said.

Mr. Abu Rdaina also demanded a stepped-up American role to pressure Israel to stop the settlement work in Arab East Jerusalem.

"What is needed is more American effort to push Israel into implementing the agreements," he said.

"There are efforts and contacts underway to solve the crisis but so far they have not succeeded," he added.

The Israeli official said Mr. Ross had proposed set-

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian demonstrator Saturday near the West Bank town of Ramallah, in the first death since protests erupted over a new Jewish settlement, hospital workers said.

Abdullah Khalil Salah, a student in his 20s, was killed by live ammunition.

It was the first death since a wave of clashes with the army on the West Bank following Israel's starting work on a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem on March 18.

Salah was hit by a bullet in the chest during clashes between the army and student demonstrators on the road from the self-ruled town of Ramallah to Jerusalem. His death came on the eve of "land day."

The students were trying to march on the main checkpoint between the two towns. Most were stopped by Palestinian police but around a dozen eluded their barricades, witnesses said.

Israeli security forces have been on high alert for a possible escalation of unrest ahead of "land day" on Sunday, an annual series of rallies and demonstrations against Israeli land confiscations.

Earlier on Saturday, small clashes erupted in Ramallah when students from Bir Zeit University marched on another nearby Israeli army checkpoint from the West Bank town.

An AFP photographer was slightly wounded in the hand by a rubber bullet, and two Palestinian protesters were taken to hospital after being overcome by tear-gas fired by soldiers.

Palestinians have been protesting daily in the West Bank since Israel broke ground on the Abu Jabal Ghneim settlement. Previous injuries have been light and the army



Two Palestinians fire a slingshot at Israeli soldiers who responded with rubber bullets and teargas during violent anti-Israeli protests in Bethlehem on Saturday (AFP photo)

Majali says Albright comments could boost support for Saddam

AMMAN (Agencies) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali has said recent comments by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright were likely to backfire and strengthen support for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

"When Mrs. Albright says what she said about the Iraqi regime, this is equivalent to interference in Iraqi internal matters," Dr. Majali was quoted as saying by the London-based Arabic language Al Hayat daily. "My knowledge of the Iraqi people is that when they hear this talk, their devotion to their leadership will get stronger."

Dr. Majali was reacting to a speech by Ms. Albright in which she contended President Saddam's aims would never be peaceful. Iraq's U.N. oil-for-food deal might be ended after six months, and Washington could open a dialogue with Iraq as soon as President Saddam were replaced.

"There is no doubt the style Albright used was hardline," Dr. Majali said. "We in Jordan consider it

unacceptable for a country, however big or small, to interfere in the internal matters of another country."

"We are wholeheartedly with the Iraqi people, and it is the people who should choose their leader," he added. Dr. Majali said Iraq would be a top issue in talks between King Hussein and U.S. President Bill Clinton called at their White House meeting on Tuesday.

Two years ago King Hussein, for change in Baghdad and gave sanctuary to Iraqi defectors and opposition groups.

Abdul Karim Kabariti, Dr. Majali's predecessor, first as foreign minister, and then as prime minister, was seen as spearheading the move against President Saddam.

Some Jordanians see Dr. Majali's appointment as an attempt to revive ties with Baghdad now that the start of the U.N. oil-for-food deal eased Iraq's financial crisis and Jordanian companies are scrambling to sell goods to Iraq.

The accord allows Baghdad to sell oil worth \$2 billion over six months in return for food and medicine urgently needed after more than six years of crippling trade sanctions imposed on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Dr. Majali said the sanctions were causing "human suffering which is unjustified in any form."

He said Jordan's policy on Iraq, which even during the years of sanctions has remained Jordan's biggest trading partner, had not changed over the years.

Meanwhile, Iraq accused Ms. Albright of making "insolent" remarks about the country and seeking confrontation instead of dialogue.

Information Minister Hamed Yousef Hammadi, in an editorial published in the official newspaper Al Qadisiya, also accused the U.S. of seeking to prolong the sanctions imposed on Iraq.

"The insolent remarks of Madeleine Albright are proof of the determination of the United States to

firmly earlier predictions that the elections will be held in November.

He added that special voting cards will be distributed to voters. The cards will cost JD1 and will be valid for ten years.

"Doves" as well as "hawks" in the IAF have said they were concerned over what form the new electoral districts will take and what criteria will be used in redrawing them.

Mr. Rashid also con-

Cabinet discusses current issues

AMMAN (Petra) — The situation in the Middle East in general and the main obstacles impeding the Middle East peace process in particular will be among the top issues which His Majesty King Hussein will discuss with the U.S. administration during his current visit to the U.S. Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawe said Saturday.

Speaking to reporters after a regular cabinet session, Dr. Mutawe said that the King's visit and talks constitute "the most important event at the moment in view of the situation in the region which witnesses difficulties in the peace process."

Dr. Mutawe said that the cabinet, which met under the chairmanship of Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour, reviewed the outcome of a visit to the region by U.S. envoy Dennis Ross and his statements following meetings with the leaders of the Palestinian National Authority and Israel adding that the visit was aimed at sounding out the views of the two sides on the situation before reporting to the U.S. administration.

The Council of Ministers endorsed a Jordanian-Egyptian agreement reached in Cairo recently on organizing the employment of Egyptian workers in the Kingdom. The agreement stipulates that Egyptian workers have been given a deadline ending by May 31 for adjusting to the Kingdom's regulations concerning work permits. Those unable to obtain work permits will be allowed to leave the country and will be exempted from paying fines for overstaying.

According to the agreement, workers failing to

PNA wants Hamas to halt attacks

CAIRO (Agencies) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has opened a dialogue with Hamas in a bid to halt its anti-Israeli attacks, a Palestinian minister said Saturday.

"We have begun a political dialogue with all the Palestinian groups, including Hamas. We have not reached an agreement, but we have taken the first step," Culture Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo told the Arabic daily Al Hayat.

Mr. Abed Rabbo said the Islamic resistance movement (Hamas), which carried out a suicide bombing in a Tel Aviv cafe last week that killed three people and injured more than 50, was using the headline policies of Israeli Prime Minister

Benyamin Netanyahu to make a political comeback. Hamas "wants to take advantage of the situation created by Netanyahu to come back to the forefront, just as Netanyahu has tried to take advantage of Hamas actions to achieve his own political aims — to annul the accords and get out of the peace process," said Mr. Abed Rabbo.

The Palestinian minister turned on Mr. Netanyahu's accusation that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat gave a "green light" to Hamas violence, and said Mr. Netanyahu owed his election victory last May to the organisation.

Hamas was responsible for three of the four suicide bombings in Israel early

last year which were widely seen as swinging the political tide in Israel away from the incumbent Labour government towards Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing coalition.

Mr. Abed Rabbo said an explosion of violence in the region was "almost certain," and insisted the United States must take a share of the blame for giving Mr. Netanyahu the backing to carry out his hardline policies.

"The Americans, who have done many stupid things in the region, are on the verge of committing an historically stupid action) by giving Israel total support," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu's decision to start construction on a

new Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem has incensed the Arab World, and led to 10 days of violent protests in the Palestinian territories.

It was also seen as the motivation behind the Hamas suicide bombing. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, meanwhile, rejected accusations that Mr. Arafat was responsible for the upsurge in violence and dismissed a call by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright for the Palestinian leader to stamp out all violent protests.

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Saudi blast mastermind under protection of Iran — U.S. daily

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — U.S. officials suspect the mastermind behind the bombing that killed 19 airmen in Saudi Arabia is under the protection of Iran, New York daily reported Saturday.

The New York daily, citing U.S. government sources, said the discovery lends support to the theory that Iran played a major role in the attack.

The paper said U.S. and Canadian intelligence reports also suggest that Syria gave at least tacit approval to the joint Iranian-Saudi Shiite operation. Iran and Syria have denied any connection to the bombing.

But if Washington concludes they were involved, New York daily officials are saying it could jeopardize progress in Middle East peace talks involving Syria and lead to consideration of military retaliation against Iran.

The alleged mastermind, Ahmad Ibrahim Ahmad Mughassil, was identified in a Canadian court document filed Thursday in Ottawa. New York daily quoted a U.S. counter-terrorism expert as saying he fled to Syria after the attack and crossed into Iran.

The source said Mughassil "lives under the protection of, as a guest of, the Iranian government." A second U.S.

source confirmed that Mughassil has been in Iran, but suggested he may be moving around, the daily said. Evidence against Mughassil was presented in a Canadian court in the case against Hani Abdul Rahim Hussein Al Sayegh, a 28-year-old Saudi Arabian, who is being detained in the case by Ottawa.

The truck-bomb attack killed 19 U.S. service personnel billeted in the Khobar Towers complex. More than 300 U.S. and Saudi citizens were injured in the June 1996 blast. Excerpts of the confidential report released in court said.

Sayegh was a member of the Saudi Hizbollah, a group of Shiite Muslims with a history of violence and links to extremist groups in Lebanon.

Canadian officials want to depose the man Sayegh, but no court proceedings are scheduled until April 28 and officials said the battle over his extradition could be lengthy.

Sayegh allegedly conducted surveillance at the military housing complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and drove the car that signaled the go-ahead to the driver of a fuel truck packed with 2 1/2 tonnes of explosives.

Canada's intelligence agency said the man is linked

to a branch of the Iranian-backed Hizbollah movement.

Sayegh could be deported to Saudi Arabia or to the country from which he entered Canada, which was the United States, U.S. officials said. En route to Canada last August, he made a brief stop in Boston.

The White House and State Department refused comment on the case Friday. Phones at the Justice Department's press office were not answered.

The State Department brushed aside questions as to the nature of the links between the Saudi arm of Hizbollah and the Iranian-backed Hizbollah group which is based in Lebanon.

Officials also declined comment on whether the United States had been aware of the existence of the Saudi branch before this week.

"Because these issues are possibly related to the bombing, we can't give an answer," a State Department official said.

Canadian intelligence agents told a court Thursday that Sayegh, who was arrested last week at an Ottawa grocery store, should be deported as a national security threat. He has requested refugee status in Canada, claiming he was persecuted in his homeland for religious reasons.



BIR ZEIT CONFRONTATIONS: Two Israeli soldiers arrest a Palestinian man after he inhaled tear-gas during violent anti-Israeli protests in the West Bank town of Bir Zeit on Saturday (AFP photo)

Turkey buries six arson victims killed in Hague

AGRI (Agencies) — The six victims of an arson attack in the Netherlands were buried in their home village near this eastern city Saturday with some mourners chanting anti-European slogans, the Anatolian News Agency reported.

Mahide Kosedag and five of her children died in the blaze that swept through an apartment building in a Turkish neighbourhood in the Hague on Wednesday. Her husband and the couple's five other children escaped the flames.

"This event will not go unsolved," said Turkey's Environment Minister, Ziyattin Tokar, at the funeral in the village of "Eleskirt." "This government will push for (an answer)."

Turkey's State Minister for Human Rights, Lutfu Esengun, and Mr. Tokar said Europe should look to its own rights situation before criticising Turkey, whose European aspirations are hindered by a shaky human rights record.

Dutch authorities confirmed Friday that the fire was started deliberately. But it still was not clear whether the arson was racially motivated.

The six coffins, draped in Turkish flags, were flown to Turkey late Friday.

The assault was not the first arson attack on Turks in Europe.

Three young girls and two women were killed in a blaze in May 1993 in Solingen, Germany. Four right-wing extremists received prison terms ranging from 10 to 15 years for the murders.

Three other Turks were

killed in a similar attack in the northern German city of Moelln in November 1992.

"It is extremely saddening that a baby that had not even completed its 30th day was among those who died," Mr. Tokar told Anatolian News. "Such incidents, which repeatedly take place in Europe and particularly target Turks, are remarkable."

"As you see, in the West, in Europe, which we call the final cradle of civilisation and aspire to. Which we take as an example in human rights and in the way to treat people, this barbarous act took place," Mr. Tokar said.

Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo has sent a letter of condolence to the Turkish ambassador expressing his sympathy to bereaved relatives and his assurances that every effort would be made to solve the case quickly.

Minister Esengun said a government delegation was planning to visit the Netherlands next week for talks, to see what measures were being taken against racism and the latest attack in particular.

"This incident is the gravest abuse of human rights," he said. "Ending the right to live, to kill innocent people are acts that have been left behind the times. Unfortunately, this is happening in Europe on the brink of the 21st century."

"Therefore people who try to question us on the issue of human rights should first look to themselves... And take precautions," Mr. Esengun said at Ankara airport before boarding the plane to Agri.

Bangladeshi party denies stoning Arafat motorcade

DHAKA (AFP) — The main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) denied Saturday that its members were involved in the stoning of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's motorcade as he was leaving Dhaka.

"This allegation is false," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said in a published statement.

"Arafat is a respected person to everyone in this country... the question does not arise of BNP's doing such kind of work," he said. Newspaper reports said Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Mr. Arafat were in the same limousine when the coconut shells were thrown, on Wednesday, as the car passed through the central Shahbagh area.

The reports said the vehicle was not hit. Dhaka's daily Bangladesh Patrika said the coconut shells were thrown from a march by members of the BNP which is headed by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

Sheikh Hasina has ordered an enquiry into the incident and two police officers at the scene have been suspended.

Mr. Arafat, along with South African President Nelson Mandela and Turkish President Suleyman Demirel was a guest at Wednesday's celebrations marking the silver jubilee of Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan in 1971.

Mr. Arafat left for Morocco same day, cutting short his trip, while the two other leaders left on Thursday.

Iran president may meet Saudi leaders during pilgrimage

NICOSIA (AFP) — President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani is to make a pilgrimage to Mecca next month and may use the occasion to become the first Iranian leader to pay an official visit to Saudi Arabia in nearly 20 years, the Iranian ambassador in Riyadh said.

Mohammad Rida Nuri, in remarks published in a Saudi-funded newspaper, Al Sharq Al Awsat, said Mr. Rafsanjani planned to visit the holy Islamic city in Saudi Arabia between April 10 and 17.

"It's possible that he may use the occasion of the pilgrimage to make his first official visit in Saudi Arabia, where he went privately 18 years ago for a pilgrimage," the ambassador said Friday.

Relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia have been strained and Mr. Rafsanjani would be the first Iranian head of state to make an official visit to the Saudi Kingdom since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

"Rafsanjani's visit would help establish a solid base for relations between two neighbouring Muslim nations and contribute to a

climate of stability and security in the Gulf region," Mr. Nuri said.

The Iranian ambassador said Tehran is interested in improving relations with Saudi Arabia, adding that Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati had made this clear to Saudi leaders during his visit to the kingdom earlier this month.

Mr. Nuri said Mr. Rafsanjani's wife and daughter had both recently made pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia.

Iran's official IRNA news agency reported Monday that Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz planned to attend a summit in Tehran in December of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

Iran frequently criticises the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia and has called on Iranian pilgrims in the past to stage anti-American demonstrations while in the kingdom.

In 1987, more than 400 people died in clashes between Iranian pilgrims and Saudi security forces, prompting a break in diplomatic relations between the two countries from 1988 to 1991.

Yemen seeks release of 4 kidnapped Germans

SANAA (AFP) — Yemeni authorities on Saturday tried to secure the release of two German couples kidnapped by Jihm tribesmen in an eastern mountain village, in yet another blow for tourism to cash-strapped Yemen.

The Interior Ministry said that in the second kidnapping of Germans within a month, the four tourists, were grabbed as they returned to Sanaa from the Marib region, the scene of several past kidnappings.

Security forces have circled the mountain village of Al Mahajja, some 200 kilometres from the capital where the latest kidnappings took place on Thursday.

The ministry charged that the kidnappers were aiming "to sabotage the economy of Yemen and damage its image before the legislative elections" on April 27.

Sources close to Yemen's tribes, who often kidnap foreigners as a tool to pressure the government, said two men and their wives were seized by members of the Jihm tribe, but that no demands had been made yet.

The Jihm have been involved in other kidnappings.

The German Foreign Ministry in Bonn said the two men and two women were abducted by unknown persons as they were travelling between Marib city and the Yemeni capital.

A crisis unit has been set up inside the German Embassy in Sanaa under the supervision of Ambassador Helga Strachwitz, as well as in the Foreign Ministry in Bonn, a spokesman said.

The embassy, which during the last kidnapping had to go back on a report that a group of German tourists had been released, has placed a news blackout on the latest incident.

On March 3, seven German motorcycle tourists were kidnapped by 50 armed tribesmen near Tarim, 750 kilometres east of Sanaa, and held by members of the Manshil mountain tribe, north of the oil-rich Wadi Massila area.

They were freed 10 days later, after which the Yemeni government denied that it satisfied the captors' demand of a ransom of \$7 million.

A total of more than 80 foreigners have been kidnapped since 1993 by tribesmen hoping to exact ransom payments or land and road concessions from the government. All were freed unharmed.

The seizures are a threat to foreign investment and the fledgling tourism sector in Yemen, which is one of the poorest countries in the world and counts on donor countries to help with its economic reforms embarked in 1995.

Egypt police hone skills while battling extremists

CAIRO (AFP) — A tough five-year battle against militants has transformed Egypt's police force into a state-of-the-art fighting force fit to face up to the demands of the 21st century.

"Our specialists have visited their police academy and saw that they have weapons and equipment which we don't have in our country," said a Western diplomat, who asked to remain anonymous.

"Within a few years their elite forces have entered the 21st century, but the modernisation is not uniform and there are some rural precincts where a 19th century spirit still rules," the diplomat said.

General Hassan Al Ali, who took over the Interior Ministry in 1993 at the height of the campaign of unrest, made the modernisation of the police force his top priority, aides said.

"He decided from the start to make radical changes within the police force, which had until then been trained only to fight common crime," police spokesman Raouf Al Minawi said.

"Priority was given to training high-quality officers and as a result we now have 6,000 police cadets who graduate each year from the police academy compared to 1,000 three years ago," Mr.

Minawi said. The Interior Ministry refuses to reveal the exact strength of the police force or its budget.

But according to the London-based Institute of Strategic Studies, Egypt's police force is 300,000-strong.

A Western security expert said a quarter of the force is made up of officers and non-commissioned officers while the rest are conscripts on a three-year tour of duty.

A new police academy dedicated to President Hosni Mubarak is to open in 1998 just outside Cairo, but in the meantime cadets are training in street combat at the old school in Abbasiya in northern Cairo.

"They use ultra-modern weapons and the level of training is so good that our colleagues from Africa, the Gulf and the former Soviet Union come here for courses," Mr. Minawi said.

Earlier this month the Interior Ministry introduced magnetic identity cards which it claims cannot be forged, as part of its campaign against crime.

Over the past three years Egypt also signed 15 extradition agreements with African, Asian, Arab and former Soviet bloc countries as part of its efforts to stamp out

militant unrest.

At the end of February the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) inaugurated an FBI legal office in Cairo to help bolster cooperation between the two countries in the fight against terrorism and organised crime.

The Egyptian police force has also set up a data base on militants in Egypt and abroad and it is due to set up a site on the worldwide web within a month. Police information chief, General Mahmoud Al Fihawi, said the force also changed tactics in 1995 and set up "an information centre" to provide the press with speedy accounts of attacks after two years of withholding quick access.

"We did not want to leave the field open to the terrorists," Gen. Fihawi said. The data base helped the force "arrest several suspects within hours after they had carried out an attack," he added.

The police force has also taken steps to cut off foreign funding to militants. More than 1,160 people have been killed since the anti-government campaign was launched in March 1992. But Egypt has been plagued by unrest since 1981 when militants assassinated President Anwar Sadat.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 77111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 ...Carnegie — Jimmy Quest
14:30 ...Cartoon — Problem Child
15:00 ...French Programmes
16:00 ...Doc. — Global Family
16:25 ...Energy Express
16:50 ...Doc. — Our World, Their World
17:15 ...Documentary
18:00 ...French Programmes
19:30 ...News Headlines
19:35 ...Comedy — Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 ...Doc. — World Echo
20:30 ...Medical Drama — Side Effects
21:10 ...Doc. — Tyoons
22:00 ...News in English
22:25 ...Hot Shots
23:15 ...Sisters

PRAYER TIMES

04:05 ...Fajr
05:23 ...Sunrise/Duha
11:40 ...Dhuhr
15:11 ...Asr
17:57 ...Maghrib
19:15 ...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swefieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.
775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church
Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932

Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691

The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department
of Meteorology

Temperatures will rise today and
tomorrow with warm weather
conditions prevailing, and winds
southeasterly moderate, in Agaba,
winds will be northerly moderate
and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman 06/19

Agaba 11/26

Deserts 04/22

Jordan Valley 11/25

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Sa'ad Tawfiq 788285

Dr. Hanna Mansour 750197

Dr. Alif Shukri 898863

Dr. Nidal Al Dahleh 827195

Firas pharmacy 661912

Ferdows pharmacy 778336

Al Asema pharmacy 637055

Nairoukh pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'anneh 884876

Al Quds pharmacy 1-1

ZARQA:

Dr. Rafiq Atallah 994424

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue

Deserts 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 14, Agaba 22 Humidity

readings: Amman 58 per cent,

Agaba 35 per cent.

Rescue Police 192 62111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Dept. 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water & Sewage Complaints 297467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory

assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone

Repairs 623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

J. Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Co. 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53300

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53300

AL-HIL, Abdali 66416/46

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3

Al-Bashir 775111/26

Army, Marika 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 674155

Amal Hospital 60240/50

The Arab Centre for Heart and

Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:

Zarga Govt. Hospital

..... 091983323

Zarga National Hospital

..... 091900560

Ibn Sina Hospital 09198732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

..... 091990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital

..... 021275555

Greek Catholic Hospital

..... 02127375

Water Authority 02127375

Electric Power Co. 02127375

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

..... 021247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital

..... 03134111

HOSPITALS

Municipality announces alternate transit routes during Third Circle construction in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Amman Municipality has closed approaches to the third roundabout on Jabal Amman in order to begin construction for work on two underground tunnels, the first linking Islamic College Street with Zahran Street and the second linking Abdul Munem Riad Street with Sharif Al Hussein Ibn Ali Street.

Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi previously announced that the project, estimated to cost JD 939,000 and to be implemented by Hassan Attieh Contractors should be completed within a time frame of 100 days, as reported by Al-Dustour Arabic daily.

The two tunnels will ease traffic congestion, the mayor affirmed. The decision to construct the tunnels was taken after studies conducted by the Amman Municipality in conjunction with the ministries of public works and housing and transport and telecommunications and the Jordanian Society for the Prevention of Road Accidents and the University of Jordan's Faculty of Engineering and private engineering firms.

The municipality has already appropriated plots of land to be used in the project and has managed infrastructure services systems both in and around the project site.

In order to facilitate the transit route, the municipality has announced the following detours, according to Al-Dustour:

• Vehicles travelling from Ras Al Ain (Abdul Munem Riad street) and heading to:

(a) The first and second roundabouts — take the street to the right off of Maan Ben Zaid Street to reach the second roundabout.

(b) Prince Mohammad Street — take the previous route and turn right from the second roundabout through Al Mutaseem Street and then left onto Prince Mohammad Street.

(c) Shmeisani — take the street on the left from the Akileh Hospital traffic lights and then the next right onto Ali Yusuf Sager Street and then left to Al Mutanabbi Street and then right to reach Fares Saad Street which leads to Tawfiq Abdul Huda Street (in front of the Foreign Ministry) and then right onto Hazzaa Majali street and finally left onto Sharif Hussein Ibn Ali Street.

(d) The fourth roundabout — cars veer left from the Akileh Hospital traffic lights, then right to Ali Yusuf Sager street and then left to Mutanabbi Street to reach the roundabout.

• Vehicles travelling from the first roundabout and to:

(a) Prince Mohammad Street — go right to Mutaseem street and then left to Prince Mohammad Street.

(b) Ras Al Ain — take Abu Tammam Street to Akileh Hospital traffic lights and then left to Abdul Muem Riyad street.

(c) Shmeisani — take Abu Tammam Street and Mithqal Al Fayed Street and then turn right to Ali Yusuf Sager Street and then left to Mutanabbi Street and right to Tawfiq Abdul Huda Street and right again to Hazzaa Majali Street to reach the Tunisian Embassy traffic lights and Al Hussein Ibn Ali Street.

(d) The fourth and fifth roundabouts — take Abu Tammam Street to Mithqal Fayed Street and then go left to Ibn Sinan Al Khafaji Street to reach junction with Ibn Khaldoun Street and then turn left to reach Abdul Munem Riyad Street.

• Vehicles travelling from downtown and Prince Mohammad Street to:

(a) The second roundabout — take Ahmad Abeilu Street and follow the same routes taken by cars travelling to the first roundabout.

• Vehicles travelling from Shmeisani and Jamal Abdul Nasser Square and heading to:

(a) Prince Mohammad Street, take the street to the left of the Tunisian embassy traffic lights to reach Queen Mishah Street as well as Prince Mohammad Street.

(b) The first and second roundabouts — take the street to the left of the Tunisian traffic lights to reach Queen Mishah street and Prince Mohammad street and then right to reach Ahmad Abeilu Street and the second and first roundabouts.

(c) The fourth and fifth roundabouts — take the street to the right of the Tunisian Embassy traffic lights to Hazzaa Majali Street and then right to Zahran street to reach the fourth and fifth roundabouts.

(d) Ras Al Ain — take the street to the right of the Tunisian Embassy traffic lights to reach Hazzaa Majali street, and then Zahran Street and then go left to Ibn Sinan Al Khafaji Street to reach junction with Ibn Khaldoun Street and then turn left to reach Abdul Munem Riyad Street.

• Vehicles travelling from the fourth roundabout and heading to:

(a) Ras Al Ain — take Ibn Sinan Khafaji Street to Ibn Khaldoun Street and Abdul Munem Riyad Street.

(b) Shmeisani — take the street to the left of the Foreign Ministry to reach the junction with Hazzaa Majali street then turn left to reach the Tunisian Embassy traffic lights and then left to Sharif Hussein Ibn Ali Street.

(c) Prince Mohammad Street — take the street to the left of the Foreign Ministry to reach Hazzaa Majali street, then right to the Tunisian Embassy traffic lights and Prince Mohammad Street.

(d) The first and second roundabouts — take the same route as in (c) and then to the right to Ahmad Abeilu Street to reach the first and second roundabouts.

Court to call police officers to retestify in 'Udwan Mills' case

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Amman Criminal Court Saturday decided to recall 12 police officers to testify in the retrial of 10 people, five of them sentenced to death in 1995.

During a five-minute court session, convened upon the request of the Court of Cassation and presided over by Judge Abdul Rahman Tawfiq, the court decided to subpoena the 10 police officers who wrote police reports when the group was first apprehended in 1992.

The court decided to recall these witnesses to testify regarding the reports they wrote concerning stolen items found in the defendants' possession," Judge Tawfiq explained.

The court tribunal sat April 12 to hear three witnesses.

A total of 120 witnesses have testified in court during the past four years, in one of the longest cases to be heard in Jordan.

The ten defendants are part of an original group of twelve, including two women, who first stood trial at the State Security Court for allegedly com-

mitting a total of 230 crimes.

They were nicknamed "Udwan Mills" as they were captured in a police raid in the Udwan Mills area of Sukhneh.

In July of 1995, the Criminal Court declared 10 of the 12 group members guilty of committing five murders, several armed robberies, thefts, attempted murder, kidnapping and fraud.

Two of the victims were security officers. A pair of the original defendants were cleared of all charges while the remaining ten, including

the women, received prison terms ranging from 10 years to the death penalty.

The Court of Cassation returned the case to the Criminal Court in April of last year after six months of revision, requesting a retrial.

It stated that it relied only on the defendants' own testimonies and failed to consider physical evidence.

This decision was prompted by the defendants' claims that they were subjected to physical and mental duress and forced to confess.

ESCWA to hold water resources session

By Tanya Habjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) will hold the first session of its committee on water resources Sunday, followed by an expert regional water studies meeting Monday, according to an ESCWA statement.

The water resource committee will formulate priorities for ESCWA's proposed work pro-

gramme, follow up on progress achieved by ESCWA member states on water resource issues, and discuss the ongoing activities of ESCWA's Energy, Natural Resources and Environment division.

During the "expert group meeting," participants will review ESCWA's recent investigative studies on basalt aquifers, water resource assessment using remote sensing techniques, and propose

plans of action to implement future regional water studies, the statement said.

Participants will include government representatives from ESCWA member states, experts from Arab, regional, and international organizations active in the field of water resources, and representatives of the United Nations.

Both meetings will be held under the patronage of Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin.

'Jerash festival to open in July with over 20 countries participating'

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jerash Festival for Culture and Art will open on July 23 with the participation of over 20 countries, Secretary General of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Akram Masarweh said Saturday.

In a press conference, Mr. Masarweh stated that Jordan will market the three-week festival through travel agencies in the Kingdom to attract tourists to the festival, which will be held in the ancient Roman city of Jerash.

"Travel agents and Jordanian hotels will play a major role in marketing the festival world wide to ensure the maximum number of visitors," he said during

the 90-minute press conference.

Mr. Masarweh, who heads the Jerash Festival Committee, stated that the festival will include a fashion show of Jordanian dresses, a ballet, an opera, plays, pop and folkloric bands, sculpture and handicrafts contests and poetry recitals.

He stated that, for the first time, the fashion show, handicrafts, and sculpture contests will be conducted with Jordanian and Arab participants.

No Israeli band will participate in the festival, according to Mr. Masarweh, but a band representing Israeli Arabs will perform.

Mahmoud Darwish to perform
The well-known

Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish will participate in the festival along with other Arab poets, he affirmed.

Two Shakespearean plays, A Midsummer Night's Dream and Much Ado About Nothing, will be presented at Anemis Theatre during the festival, Mr. Masarweh explained.

A play by the French dramatist Moliere is expected to be performed in Jerash as well as an Egyptian play, he stated.

The Russian ballet, "Sleeping Beauty," is also on the festival agenda.

South Africa to participate for first time

Mr. Masarweh enumerated the festival as

including participants from Jordan, United States, Chile, Japan, Germany, Lebanon, Palestine, Poland, Greek, Egypt, Romania, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), France, Russia, Britain and South Africa.

Among the Arab singers who are slated to participate are: Hani Shukr, from Egypt; Wael Kfoury, Assi Hillani and Nawal Zoubi from Lebanon, and Abdul Majeed Abdullah from Saudi Arabia.

This year will mark the 16th year of the Jerash Festival for Culture and Art, originally conceived by Her Majesty Queen Noor.

'Queen Elizabeth' docks at Aqaba port

AQABA (Petra) — Queen Elizabeth, a ship with 1,600 passengers has docked at Aqaba, that passengers might disembark and travel to Petra and Wadi Rum.

Welcoming passengers at the port was Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Agel Biltaji and senior local officials who later arranged for an entertainment party in which the

Jordan Armed Forces Brass Band, the Maan Folklore Troupe and the Royal Falcons Troupe participated.

Ministry of Tourism officials stated that the tourists, currently on a three-month trip around the globe, are of 30 different nationalities.

Subsequent to his welcome, Mr. Biltaji inspected

the southern crossing, north of Aqaba and inspected services and facilities.

He also discussed ongoing arrangements for a Peugeot cars marketing campaign, organized by the French Peugeot car company with local officials.

Touring the southern regions of Jordan aboard

the cars are 1,300 journalists, who arrived from Paris to Aqaba aboard Royal Jordanian (RJ).

The journalists expect to visit Wadi Araba, Madaba, Petra, Siyaghah archaeological site, Aqaba and Amman. The Peugeot campaign is the second of its kind to be held by the French company in southern Jordan.

JTIC announces construction of new tourism village

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Tourism Investments Company (JTIC) Saturday announced that it is creating a new "tourism village" at the Petra region in southern Jordan to be known as "Hayat Zaman."

The project is slated to cost JD 6 million. Director General of the Taybet Zaman Tourism Village Usama Dabbas maintained that the company is establishing the new tourism village by restoring

and refurbishing an old village — Nawafleh — which dates back more than 200 years.

The company plans to develop and modernise the old village, providing it with modern conveniences, while retaining its rural and traditional character, Mr. Dabbas affirmed.

It will thereby be transformed into a five star tourist resort, he added.

The project as to be completed in 18 months, Mr.

Dabbas said, comprises a 32-dunum area, will boast 104 modern rooms and a luxury wing, an indoor swimming pool, a multi-purpose ball, a popular souk (market), displaying traditional handicrafts and foods, a Turkish bath and a Roman pool as well as a museum.

He estimated that the project would create 1,200 jobs for inhabitants of the Petra region.

The company intends to

create the new tourist village in the style of its other villages — Kan Zaman, south of Amman, Taybet Zaman, near Petra, and Kan Zaman soon to be established in Karak.

Mr. Dabbas recalled that Taybet Zaman won the British Airways annual Tourism for Tomorrow award as well as accolades from associations of American, British and Asian tourist agents.

Palestinian shot dead in Ramallah

(Continued from page 1)

claims to have restricted itself to rubber bullets.

In Bethlehem, Palestinian protesters burned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in effigy on Saturday in a demonstration which turned into rock-throwing clashes with Israeli soldiers.

Some 200 Palestinians, mostly students, marched to an Israeli checkpoint near a Jewish holy site in Bethlehem, and set fire to a dummy representing the Israeli leader.

They also burned an effigy representing Palestinians who sold land to Jews on Jebel Abu Ghneim, where Israel has begun work on the Har Homa settlement.

Protesters then began throwing stones at Israeli soldiers, who responded with tear-gas and rubber bullets. Three Palestinians were injured by rubber bullets

before the protest dispersed.

The violence broke out as U.S. Envoy Dennis Ross returned home to report on his two-day effort to save the peace process, disrupted by the settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

At another location in Ramallah, students from Bir Zeit University held a march to and stoned Israeli soldiers, who fired tear-gas and rubber bullets. Two students were arrested.

At the Al Ram junction, youths burned tires to block the main Ramallah-Jerusalem road.

Strong reinforcements of Israeli troops, backed by tanks and snipers, were in the West Bank in case of serious violence, but most Palestinian towns were quiet.

In Nazareth, Israeli Arabs from left-wing parties demonstrated Saturday in support of the Palestinians and against the Har Homa project.

What's Going On

AMMAN THEATRE FESTIVAL

* Jordanian play "The Hole" and Swedish play "Romeo and Juliet in Sarajevo" respectively at 7:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. at the Royal Cultural Centre.

LECTURE

* "The Arabs ... Where To?" (in Arabic), by Hafez Al-Hajj, at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Artworks by Egyptian artist Jamil Shafiq entitled "Black and White" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 667596), until April 10.

* Display of products by Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation, Wadi Saqra (Tel. 699141/2), until March 30.

* Paintings by Saadi Dawood at the Orient Gallery, Issam Ajlouni St., Shmeisani, until March 31.

* Spring exhibition 1997 at Orfali Art Gallery Umm Utheina, until April 6.

* Artworks by Mohammad Ali Shaker at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until March 31.

* Works by Paris-based Syrian artist Ziad Dalloul at Darat Al Funtun, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 3. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

Harry .. Harry ..
Five Days Left ..

I Love You My Friend
You make me happy at Eid

DAY SIX

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
PRINCESS RANIA AL-ABDULLAH
JORDAN RIVER FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Is organizing a fund raising campaign

From March 25 until April 3, 1997
Between 8:00am - 7:00pm

You can deposit your contribution to A special Jordan River For Development Projects' bank
account number 48/50493/20 - At The Arab Jordan Investment Bank

Donated gifts could be sent to
one of the following locations:-
Jordan River Designs showroom (See map)
Aramex (Mecca St./Infront of Dahiat Al Hussien)
Aramex (Irbid)
McDonald's (Mecca St.)
Al Ahlia Abela
Iman Early Learning Center (Abdoun)
Safeway
Fakherdin Restaurant

For further information call 613081 or Fax 613083

Gingrich slams China over rights

BEIJING (R) — The speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, Saturday criticised China for lack of basic freedoms and said its handling of Hong Kong will be crucial.

Mr. Gingrich's remarks on the sensitive issues of human rights, Hong Kong and Taiwan came a day after Chinese President Jiang Zemin described recent improvements in Sino-U.S. ties as being like "sunshine after rain."

"America cannot remain silent about the basic lack of freedom — speech, religion, assembly, the press — in China," Mr. Gingrich said in a speech to students at Beijing's Institute of Diplomacy.

"In the most basic sense, we are simply asking the Chinese government to enforce its own constitution," he said, dismissing Beijing's criticism that such demands were interference in its internal affairs.

"Surely asking a government to enforce its own basic law is legitimate," he told the gathering of about 100 students.

Mr. Gingrich praised China's market-oriented economic reforms as creating unprecedented wealth and choice for the Chinese people but warned that Beijing must eventually relax political controls as well.

"Any effort to provide a partial freedom to any people, to tell them that they can be free in one sphere but not in another, will ultimately fail," he said.

Mr. Gingrich is the latest senior U.S. official to visit China amid what both sides say is a growing rapprochement after ties deteriorated in 1995 and 1996 over issues such as human rights, Taiwan and trade.

U.S. Vice-President Al Gore wound up a visit to China Friday as part of the effort to ensure relations remain healthy and to prepare for an exchange of presidential visits.

But Beijing and Washington say there are still many areas of disagreement, and President Jiang told Mr. Gingrich in talks Friday that the United States must handle the touchy issue of Taiwan with care.

"We have noticed that more U.S. congressmen have realised the sensitivity and importance of the Taiwan question," the official People's Daily quoted Mr. Jiang as telling Mr. Gingrich.

How Beijing handled its resumption of sovereignty over the British colony of Hong Kong on July 1 would be key in shaping future relations with Washington and arch-rival Taiwan, Mr. Gingrich told the diplomatic school.

"How the transition is managed will be critical to the future of Taiwan, to China's international standing, and to China's relations with the U.S.," Mr. Gingrich said.

The U.S. House of Representatives earlier this month passed a bill calling on Beijing to honour its promise to preserve Hong Kong's free-wheeling capitalist lifestyle after the handover.

China has said it will roll back democratic reforms enacted in Hong Kong, vowing to scrap the territory's elected legislature and ditch or revise a raft of laws passed by Britain to ensure civil liberties.

Beijing has sought to bring Taiwan, split from the mainland since the end of the 1949 Chinese Civil War, into its fold under the "one country, two systems" formula it is using for Hong Kong but Taipei has insisted unity must take place after democratic change in China.

Mr. Gingrich, who arrived in Beijing Thursday, is to make a brief stop in Taiwan before winding up his Asian tour.



Indian Foreign Secretary Salman Haider (left) leads his Pakistani counterpart Shamshad Ahmad at New Delhi's Hyderabad House for talks. Arch-rivals Pakistan and India resumed a dialogue that collapsed in January 1994 over the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir (Reuters photo)

India, Pakistan talks reportedly bogged down over Kashmir

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The first talks in three years between South Asian rivals India and Pakistan Saturday bogged down over the Himalayan state of Kashmir, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

The two sides were still arguing on the agenda for the dialogue, which started here Friday amid sabre-rattling over the disputed state, the news agency said quoting Indian and Pakistani officials.

PTI said Indian officials "firmly told Pakistan that it would not compromise its sovereignty" over Kashmir, which is held in parts by both countries.

Pakistan, PTI added, had "toughened its stand on Kashmir."

PTI quoted unnamed officials as saying that the Pakistani team wanted "some progress on Kashmir before other (bilateral) issues could be tackled."

"Even if India agreed that Kashmir is a dispute, that itself will show that some progress has been achieved" in the dialogue, an unnamed Pakistani official said.

The talks were originally expected to last four days until Monday, when the Pakistanis fly back home.

The latest development occurred as foreign secretaries Shahshad Ahmad of Pakistan and Salman Haider of India met over lunch on the second day of the dialogue at the Hyderabad House.

Neither side spoke to journalists after the 90-minute "working lunch." An Indian official said the delegations would again meet Saturday.

The current talks, if successful, were expected to pave the way for a foreign minister level meeting next month, followed by a possible meeting of the two prime ministers later in the year.

India and Pakistan differ over Kashmir's inclusion in the talks.

New Delhi wants the controversial issue to be set aside while discussions can be held on other matters in a

bid to promote friendly ties. Islamabad, however, insists on taking up the Kashmir issue first.

The last foreign secretaries dialogue between India and Pakistan, held in Islamabad in January 1994, broke down amid acrimony.

Since then, their relations have strained, mainly over Kashmir.

An Indian expert, however, said Saturday that the current negotiations were the beginning of a detente between the South Asian neighbours which have fought three wars and are known to possess nuclear weapons.

India's former Foreign Secretary S.K. Singh said the talks were the first stage in a "300-step journey" aimed at resolving their differences.

"Pakistan has to realise that Kashmir is not the be all and end all of the world," Mr. Singh, a former Indian envoy to Islamabad, told AFP. "Only then will any talks bear fruit."

Earlier Saturday, Pakistan's Ahmad called on Indian Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda and was closeted with him for some 20 minutes. Diplomats said it was a courtesy call.

The first round of talks Friday ended in an upbeat mood, but were dismissed by Muslim separatists in the Indian state of Kashmir as "gossip."

Mr. Ahmad had said on arrival Thursday that Kashmir would be the "core issue" in the talks.

"It is our belief that given the political will on the part of the leadership of our two countries, the time is propitious for us to seize this opportunity for removing the root cause of the tension between Pakistan and India," he said.

"There is an urgent need to address all outstanding issues, particularly the core issue of Kashmir," he said.

Meanwhile, the head of Kashmir's main separatist organisation criticised India and Pakistan Saturday for holding bilateral talks without consulting Kashmiris

about their own destiny.

"We don't see this as a bilateral issue," Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, chairman of Kashmir's All Parties Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference, told Reuters by telephone.

"It's not a territorial or regional dispute they can discuss by themselves...The Kashmiris must be involved."

Mr. Farooq was among a dozen Hurriyat leaders detained for five hours in New Delhi Friday to prevent them from staging a protest at Hyderabad House, the state venue of talks between the top foreign ministry officials of India and Pakistan.

Hurriyat is an umbrella organisation for 30 religious and political groups demanding a plebiscite in which Kashmiris would vote whether to join Islamic Pakistan or Hindu-majority India.

Mr. Farooq said Hurriyat did not oppose rapprochement between India and Pakistan, but wanted Kashmiris to be part of any talks about their homeland.

"We oppose any agreement that excludes the basic, principal party," he declared.

Mr. Farooq said Pakistan had failed to consult Hurriyat leaders on its decision to respond positively to India's invitation to resume a dialogue stalled since January 1994.

"So Pakistan doesn't know the reality on the ground and India is in charge of everything in Kashmir, increasing suppression and oppression," he said. "They can't talk peace with Pakistan while they are at war with Kashmir."

Mr. Farooq said Hurriyat was ready to play a positive role in restoring peace if India scaled down security operations in Kashmir and took other measures to reduce tension.

He said Hurriyat could persuade armed militants to "suspend or renounce their activities" if India was willing to come to the table and talk peace with Kashmiris.

Taleban seek world's purest Islamic state

KABUL (R) — The head of the Taleban's religious police said Saturday that they wanted to establish the world's purest Islamic state and re-establish Afghan culture.

"Ultimately we want to establish the purest Islamic state in the world," Maulawi Rafiullah Muazin, head of the department for promoting virtue and preventing vice, told reporters.

Since the Taleban took over Kabul six months ago they have ordered men to grow their beards and wear traditional Afghan dress. They have driven women from the workplace and made the burqa, a shroud-like head-to-toe veil with a small hexagonal patch of gauze over the eyes, mandatory dress for all women outside the home.

Mr. Muazin said that a final decision on women's rights to work would have to wait until the whole of Afghanistan was under Taleban control.

"The government is paying those women who used to work in the ministries. They will have to sit in their homes until an Islamic government is established throughout Afghanistan, and then a decision will be made about their status by Islamic scholars."

Mr. Muazin added that Afghanistan's Islamic culture had been altered over the last half-century, particularly in the urban centres, and had only remained pure in the villages. He said the Taleban were trying to redress the balance.

"Our culture has been greatly changed over the past 40 or 50 years, particularly in Kabul. In the villages the culture has not changed much. For example, allowing women to go to work is a change in culture," he said.

"The Taleban are trying to purify our culture. We are trying to re-establish a pure Islamic culture and tradition."

Mr. Muazin defended the Taleban's policy of punishing those who trimmed their beards.

"There can be no question that trimming beards is un-Islamic," he said.

Mr. Muazin said that his department, which reports directly to the head of the Taleban movement, Mullah Mohammad Omar, had dismissed almost 100 people, including deputy ministers and heads of department, from government posts over the past few days for trimming their beards.

"Even deputy ministers have been dismissed for trimming their beards, and I have told them that there is no chance of getting their jobs back. We have been telling them for three or four months not to trim their beards and now they have no excuse," he said.

Mr. Muazin defended the work of his department in forcing people to pray five times daily and grow their beards, saying that their decrees were for the spiritual welfare of the population.

"By forcing people to pray five times a day and grow their beards, we are not being cruel it is for their benefit in the next world," he said.

Mr. Muazin accused the west of hypocrisy in its reaction to the Taleban's attempts to bring Afghanistan back to its roots.

"In the time of King Zahir Shah (who was deposed in 1973), Afghans were not allowed into certain buildings in Kabul if they were not wearing Western dress, but no one complained about that," he said.

Mr. Muazin said that despite their intention to reimpose a purified culture on Afghanistan, the Taleban were not against progress, as long as it conformed to their strict interpretation of Islamic Law.

"We are not against progress. For instance we are not against rockets going into space, but we are against a man and a woman who are not married sharing the rocket," he said.

Defector's list could be dynamite for S. Korea, former agent says

SEOUL (AFP) — A former South Korean intelligence official has warned that a top North Korean defector's knowledge of Pyongyang's agents in the South could be political dynamite here.

Yonhap News Agency Saturday quoted the former Korean National Security Planning Agency (NSPA) deputy director, Chung Hyung-Keun, as saying that if the so-called "Hwang Jang-Yop List" came out, the effect could be "explosive."

Mr. Hwang, the chief architect of the North's "juche" (self-reliance) ideology and the most senior official ever to defect from the Communist regime in Pyongyang, is currently holed up in a safe house in the Philippines.

In an article leaked to the press in Seoul in February, the authenticity of which has been questioned by some analysts, Mr. Hwang

charged that some 30,000 North Korean agents were operating in South Korea.

"If Mr. Hwang, on arrival in this country, reveals the list of pro-Pyongyang elements in the nation, the Hwang Jang-Yop List, depending on its contents could have tremendous explosive power... whether we want it or not," Mr. Chung, now a lawmaker for the ruling New Korea Party (NKP), was quoted as saying.

Mr. Chung made the comments in a closed-door NKP session in the city of Chonan Thursday, Yonhap said.

To date most attention has been centred on the intelligence gold mine Mr. Hwang is expected to bring to Seoul, given his high position and proximity to the leadership in the secretive reclusive state.

He is expected to come to Seoul sometime in April, under an agreement reached in Beijing where he sought

asylum in the South Korean consulate on Feb. 15.

Under South Korea's national security law, any unauthorised contacts with North Korea are punishable by long prison sentences.

The NSPA later Saturday issued an official statement disassociating itself from Mr. Chung's remarks.

"The NSPA has never offered any material or discussed information of this kind with anyone," the agency said in the statement faxed to news agencies.

"The NSPA checked with the person who reportedly leaked the contents of the reported list to the press, and he affirmed that he has never talked to any NSPA official or received any relevant information from them," it said.

So he seems to have expressed his personal opinion, and it cannot be attributed to the NSPA, and is only a private opinion."

Gore meets S. Korean president over peace drive

SEOUL (R) — U.S. Vice-President Al Gore held private talks Saturday with South Korean President Kim Young-Sam to discuss ways to convince North Korea to join four-nation peace talks.

"These discussions take place at a very important time," Mr. Gore told Mr. Kim at the start of the talks at the presidential Blue House.

International aid agencies say North Korea is weeks away from starvation, and in what South Korea regards as evidence of its desperation has offered to join peace talks if Seoul and Washington first agree to supply substantial food aid.

The United States and South Korea reject any preconditions for talks but are dropping hints they could do more to relieve the North's suffering once it sits at the peace table.

"I hope that the proposed four-party talks will be realised soon so that the grave difficulties North Korea is facing will be alleviated," Mr. Kim told Mr. Gore, according to a text of his comments released in Seoul.

Mr. Kim made no direct reference to aid. The United States and South Korea have agreed to chip in \$10 million and \$6 million respectively to the latest U.N. food appeal for North Korea.

Mr. Kim said Seoul and Washington "are cooperating even more closely with each other than ever before to establish durable peace on the Korean peninsula."

The United States has been trying to convince North Korea to accept a proposal for talks between North and South Korea, the United States and China put forward by U.S. President Bill Clinton and Mr. Kim last April.

The talks would be aimed initially at securing a lasting peace to replace the armistice that ended the 1950-1953 Korean War, which the United States believes would serve as a springboard for ending tensions on the peninsula.

After his talks Saturday with Mr. Kim, Mr. Gore was to visit the demilitarized zone separating the North and South and meet some of the 37,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea.

Mr. Gore, who spent five days in China before arriving in Korea Friday, discussed the talks during his meetings with Chinese President Jiang Zemin, U.S. officials said.

North Korea has been devastated by two consecutive years of floods, and there are reports its citizens have been reduced to foraging for tree bark and edible grass to survive.

N. Korean rulers report rift with army

TOKYO (R) — North Korean rulers have revealed to a visiting U.S. Senate delegation that there is a rift with their own powerful military over holding peace talks before more international aid arrives in the famine-hit nation.

Members of the delegation told a news conference in Tokyo Saturday that top North Korean officials were surprisingly frank in warning that military opposition could scuttle talks between the two Koreas, the United States and China to formally end the 1950-53 Korean War.

Stalinist North Korea has been devastated by two years of floods, creating serious food shortages which aid agencies say places the nation just weeks away from disaster.

The senatorial delegation met in Pyongyang Friday with North Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-Ju and Kim Kye Gwan, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Both men are regarded as close to North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il.

However North Korean military officials snubbed the five Senators who were led by Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

a key player in funding U.S. relief efforts to North Korea.

The other Senators, all members of the committee, were Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), Thad Cochran (R-Mississippi), Pete Domenici (R-New Mexico) and Pat Roberts (R-Kansas).

"We regret that we did not meet with officials of the Korean people's army. We had hoped to learn of the military's views on the four-party talks," the Senators said in a statement.

"Failure by the North Korean military to support and participate in the negotiations... Could pose an insurmountable obstacle," the statement added.

There have regularly been unconfirmed reports of a power struggle involving the military, which analysts believe does not fully back apparent efforts by Kim Jong-Il to end North Korea's isolation.

"I think that we were led to believe that there is a rift. The military is disturbed that the civilian authorities have not been able to obtain the food and fuel they'd been told they'd get," Sen. Stevens told reporters.

"They were open in saying that if they were unable to get food supplies they were not sure how the military would respond to participation in the four-party peace talks. It wasn't anything said secretly. It was both said very openly and forthrightly," Sen. Domenici said.

In Seoul Saturday, U.S. Vice-President Al Gore discussed ways to convince North Korea to join the talks with South Korean President Kim Young-Sam after a five-day visit to China where he also discussed the talks with Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

In its first formal response to the call for talks, Pyongyang insisted the United States and South Korea promise first to supply it with substantial food aid.

But the United States has firmly rejected any preconditions for the talks while promising "good things will happen" once negotiations start.

The Senators said North Korean officials specifically mentioned 1.5 million tonnes of grain they believe they should receive as part of a 1994 agreement which persuaded North Korea to end a suspected nuclear weapons programme.

The deal also included fuel and other aid that would be supplied as the programme was run down.

S. Korean students take to the streets as Hanbo's founder sinks deeper in trouble

SEOUL (AFP) — Hundreds of students marched here Saturday demanding the arrest of President Kim Young-Sam's son over the Hanbo scandal, as prosecutors found more millions embezzled by the Hanbo Group patriarch.

"Down with Kim Young-Sam. Arrest Hyun-Chul," read banners carried by some 2,000 university students as they marched in drizzle down Seoul's main Chong-No Boulevard.

Riot police stood by but did not intervene, an AFP photographer said.

The opposition accuses Mr. Hyun-Chul, the second son of the president, of being at the center of the loans for kickbacks scandal.

Prosecutors, meanwhile, alleged Hanbo patriarch Chung Tae-Soo had extracted a total of 173.8 billion won (\$195 million), \$73 million more than earlier revealed.

The Hanbo founder has already been jailed on charges of embezzling \$122 million from the group and with diverting another \$235 million into a slush fund.

The charges against him also include bribing politicians and government officials in return for pressuring banks to lend massive loans to Hanbo.

The prosecutors also said they had found that Mr. Chung had drawn \$27 million from his and his son's bank accounts with the apparent purpose of lobbying politicians in the run up to the parliamentary elections last April.

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Cambodia's King Sihanouk hints he will abdicate this year or next

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk has hinted he will abdicate the throne either this year or next but promised he would not involve himself in politics and said fears of that were "ridiculous."

The king made his comments in an interview with his staff released Saturday when asked for his response to the "very hot reaction" by some in Phnom Penh to the possibility that he might abdicate before national elections scheduled for 1998.

"These esteemed people and political parties are curiously scared to death of my entry into the political arena after my abdication in 1997 or 1998," the king said. "I thank them for being scared to death as it honors me greatly."

"But I am disappointed by the fact that they consider me a liar when I give and give again (my) total and irreversible formal assurances of non-engagement in political life, the legislative election and others in Cambodia and my absolute neutrality vis-a-vis Cambodian political parties."

Last month, the king said he was "seriously envisaging abdicating" in part because of growing Republican sentiment in his country but he said he would not enter politics.

Nevertheless, the announcement sent shock waves through the political establishment in Phnom Penh, particularly the former Communist Cambodia People's Party (CPP).

The CPP is known to fear the possibility of the revered king stepping down to assist its former battlefield enemy and current main rival and partner in the ruling coalition, the royalist FUNCINPEC Party.

Shortly after the king made his desire to abdicate known, CPP leader and Second Prime Minister Hun

Sen said he would propose a constitutional amendment to bar members of the royal family from engaging in politics.

The proposal was seen by many as a jab at not only the king but his son, First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh, the president of FUNCINPEC.

On Friday, in another interview, King Sihanouk said the only way to bar royalty from politics would be to transform the current elective constitutional monarchy into a hereditary one such as exists in great Britain and other monarchies where royals do not have political rights.

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Red Cross workers walk past a Rwandan refugee who lies dead along the road as they evacuate a young woman found dying in a swamp. Some 100,000 Rwandan refugees who fled the Tingi Tingi camp one month ago are now stranded within rebel held territory south of Kisangani. Red Cross workers say some 50 of them are dying of malnutrition and disease each day (Reuters photo)

U.S. families prepare to bury mass cult suicide victims

RANCHO SANTA FE, California (R) — Families of the victims of a mass cult suicide prepared Saturday to bury their loved ones, ending one chapter of a tale that mixed computers, religion and science fiction in a bizarre and deadly brew.

All 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cult killed themselves over a period of days by overdosing on the sleeping pill phenobarbital, taken either in pudding or apple sauce and washed down by gulps of vodka.

According to their suicide notes, the cult members — who ran a successful business designing computer websites for the Internet — died in the belief that a spaceship hiding behind the Hale-Bopp comet nearing Earth would take them to heaven.

Their bodies were discovered Wednesday in the \$1.6 million mansion the cult rented in the exclusive San Diego suburb of Rancho Santa Fe, but officials said the death ritual probably began Saturday with 15 of the group ingesting the deadly mixture, helped by others who later went through the same deadly process.

Calvin Vine, an investigator with the San Diego County coroner's office, said the funerals would take place in several different states where the deceased had families.

"We have actively discouraged (families) from coming here," he told reporters. He said that a local funeral home in San Diego was coordinating the removal of the bodies to a num-

ber of states. The bodies were expected to be shipped out of San Diego Monday.

Officials piecing together the grim story of the Heaven's Gate cult suicides Friday released more bizarre details of a tragedy that has shocked the nation.

Among the new revelations were the fact that some of the males among the 39 victims had been castrated, and that one was the brother of a star of the 1960's "Star Trek" television series — itself the object of a cult following among fans of science fiction and fantasy.

In a videotaped suicide note aired Friday, members of the group explained how their deaths were part of a greater plan to join with the space aliens they believed were following the comet Hale-Bopp to Earth.

"We have no hesitation to leave this place, to leave the bodies that we have," charismatic cult leader Marshall Applewhite, one of those who died, said on the video.

The Washington Post reported in Saturday's edition that Applewhite was fired from his post as music professor at Houston's Catholic University of St. Thomas in 1970, after administrators learned he was in a homosexual relationship with a student.

The Post reported that UFO cult author James Lewis wrote that a depressed and ashamed Applewhite checked into a psychiatric hospital the following year and asked to be "cured" of his homosexual desires.

It was there he met Bonnie Nettles, who became his spiritual companion and co-founder of the group, the Post reported. The couple renounced all sexuality and sought to purge it via their cult.

Coroners had completed autopsies on 30 of the victims by Friday afternoon, and planned to finish the rest over the weekend.

At a news conference Friday, San Diego County medical examiner Dr. Brian Blackbourne said the bodies of the some of the male victims, including Applewhite, had been castrated.

The tragedy at the million dollar mansion touched Hollywood, 320 kilometres to the north, with the revelation that one of the victims was the brother of actress Michelle Nichols, who played Lt. Uhura in the original "Star Trek" television series.

Thomas Nichols, 59, was one of two black members of the group. Two others were identified as Hispanic, and the rest were white.

"My brother was a highly intelligent and beautiful man. He made his choices and we respect those choices," Michelle Nichols said on CNN's Larry King Live programme.

The group sent two tapes to a former cult member and left two at the mansion in which their bodies were found.

According to the list of the dead, the cult members came from California, Texas, New Mexico, Florida, Colorado, Arizona, Washington, Minnesota, Utah and Canada.

Rwandan president sacks three ministers; one quits

NAIROBI (R) — Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu has fired three cabinet ministers and demoted his finance minister while the powerful Hutu interior minister has resigned, a presidential aide said Saturday.

Joseph Bideri told Reuters by telephone from the capital Kigali that deputy prime minister and interior minister Colonel Alexis Kanyarengwe resigned late Friday.

Col. Kanyarengwe, a Hutu, is also chairman of the ruling Rwanda Patriotic Front and led the Tutsi-dominated RPF into victory in 1994 after many years in exile that began when he fell out with the administration of late Hutu strongman Juvenal Habyarimana.

The Hutu fled in 1994 during civil war in fear of reprisals for the three-month mass slaughter of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu moderates by Hutu troops, militiamen and mobs that followed Habyarimana's death when his plane was shot down.

The RPF first invaded the tiny Central African nation in 1990 from Uganda where commanders such as military supreme and Vice-President Major-General Paul Kagame served in the army.

Mr. Bideri said Kanyarengwe resigned of his own accord: "It was his own decision because he wants to concentrate on his other jobs."

But political analysts expressed surprise at the departure of the ambitious Kanyarengwe. "It is a surprise move because in essence it takes a lot of clout from him," said an exiled influential member of Rwanda's Hutu community.

Finance Minister Marc Rugenera was demoted to the handicraft, mining and tourism post. Little-known Jean Birara was appointed finance minister with economist Donat Kaberuka as his minister of state.

Mr. Kaberuka has worked at the Abidjan-based inter-African coffee organisation as chief economist for the last 10 years.

Mr. Bideri cautioned against reading too much into the changes, saying the "whole exercise is a normal one. Col. Kanyarengwe wants to concentrate on other jobs he occupies."

Mr. Bideri said Mr. Bizimungu, also a Hutu, had retained Gen. Kagame as vice-president and defence minister. Gen. Kagame is also chairman of the military high command, which makes him the most powerful politician in Rwanda.

Zairean troops reportedly abandon town after clashes

NAIROBI (R) — Zairean soldiers have fled the town of Kasenga after clashes with the local population in support of rebel leader Laurent Kabila but the rebels have not yet entered the town, a regional military source said Saturday.

The source, who closely monitors the war between Mr. Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) and Zaire's ragged army, spoke a day after expatriates and local sources in the town of Lubumbashi said Kasenga had fallen.

The source, who declined to be named, said Kasenga units of Zaire's undisciplined and fast retreating army looted and rampaged through the sleepy town on the river border with Zambia as they fled an angry population early Friday.

In Lubumbashi, the governor of Shaba province Kyungu Wa Kumwanza said that Zairean troops were Saturday firmly in control of Kasenga.

"My generals told me categorically and after checking that Kasenga is not in the hands of the rebels but of Zairean troops," he told reporters in Zaire's second largest city and mineral centre, 220 kilometres from Kasenga and the rebels' next declared target.

Kasenga is a small town with an airstrip and little else. It supplies Lubumbashi with fish, caught in Lake Mweru.

"Our latest intelligence is that the rebels have not actually entered Kasenga," the military source said.

"The Zairean soldiers abandoned the town after being attacked by the local population in support of Kabila."

He added: "The skirmishes were serious and a number of people were injured. The population says it is waiting for Kabila's arrival."

The source said the town was now being controlled by civilian defence units awaiting the arrival of Mr. Kabila's forces.

"The town is under the control of civilian defence units. This is a very interesting pointer to Mr. Kabila's popularity. Rebel units are still advancing towards Kasenga and will surely receive a heroes welcome on arrival," the source said.

Reports on Kasenga came a day after Mr. Kabila's rebels and the crumbling



Two emaciated Rwandan refugee women and a child wait for help near Ubilo, a village 82 kilometres south of Kisangani, as another refugee lies dead in the background. Hundreds of Rwandan Hutu refugees are dying of disease and hunger near a railway line in the Zairean jungle where aid workers started to bring relief Friday (Reuters photo)

government of President Mobutu Sese Seko agreed to meet for their first peace talks.

The agreement, reached at a special summit in Togo of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), was immediately hit by problems.

The rebels reject a truce before talks, which they say must discuss not whether the ailing 66-year-old Mobutu transfers power, but bow and when.

"Rebel strategy centres around talking while fighting and fighting while talking," the source said Friday.

Rebels said the talks would start on Easter Monday or a day later and a government source in South Africa confirmed a meeting there was on the cards.

But in Kinshasa, Mr.

Mobutu's spokesman rejected the rebel agenda and denied a firm date for talks had yet been agreed.

Meanwhile, the U.N. refugee agency warned Saturday many Rwandan Hutu refugees trapped in the Zaire jungle would die unless aid workers provided urgently needed food, water and medicine.

Tens of thousands of Rwandan Hutus are stranded in dense jungle near a railway line south of Kisangani, Zaire's third city, which fell on March 15 to the rebels.

At least 500 have been buried since arriving at Ubilo, 82 kilometres south of the city on March 16, according to the Zairean Red Cross, and unburied bodies litter the surrounding land.

The U.N. High Commis-

sioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said it was negotiating with the rebels over a plan to give the refugees short term aid consisting of food, water and medicine and was devising plans to return them to Rwanda.

"Without the crucial elements (of this plan) the people will start dying in very large numbers. Many have already died," Filippo Grandi, head of UNHCR in Geneva told Reuters.

"There is a risk of serious epidemics if we don't bring water very quickly," Mr. Grandi said.

The U.N. World Food Programme, UNHCR and the Zairean Red Cross carried the first train-load of 120 tonnes of food and medicine to the refugees Thursday and Friday.

Albania welcomes U.N. approval of force

TIRANA (AFP) — Albania's Prime Minister, Bashkim Fino, welcomed Saturday a decision by the United Nations Security Council to approve an Italian-led multinational force to help deliver aid to his stricken country.

"The Albanian government is pleased by this decision. It represents considerable help for Albania," Mr. Fino told AFP.

"We are ready to do everything to help the action of the multi-national force (which) can count on the cooperation of the police and all state institutions," he added.

Approval for the force was given late Friday by the U.N. Security Council. The force, whose exact make-up is still unclear, will protect humanitarian aid convoys and international organisations working in the stricken nation.

The request for such a force was made by "all political parties" in Albania, Mr. Fino said, and signed by

President Sali Berisha and the prime minister.

Europe's poorest nation has been rocked by a month of violence after anti-government rebels looted weapons from military barracks and seized a string of southern towns.

Unrest has since spread across the country leaving Mr. Fino's government of reconciliation with patchy control over the Balkan state. The southern rebels are calling for Mr. Berisha's resignation, whom they blamed for the collapse of a series of bogus investment schemes.

The Italian Defence Ministry said the Albanian navy had "ignored all the instructions" given by the Italian navy ship and suddenly changed its course putting itself in the path of the Italians.

Friday's incident was the first of its kind in the Adriatic since the exodus began earlier this month. Officials said there was little chance of finding more survivors.

The Italian navy said the Albanian naval tug had been carrying about 40 refugees, but some people plucked from the sea said around 100 had been on board.

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Abou 13,000 Albanian refugees have reached Italy since March 13.

Brindisi Mayor, Lorenzo Maggi said the incident was a "tragedy which we cannot just sit back and do nothing about." He said "more than ever" it was necessary to "go to Albania" to help reconstruct the economy after weeks of civil unrest.

The multi-national force, which will operate under a mandate from Europe's security agency, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, will comprise some 2,500 troops initially, with an additional 2,500 in reinforcements.

The operation will be limited to three months and be authorized to use force, diplomats said. Italy, Austria, France, Greece, Portugal and Spain could all provide troops to the force.

At an experts meeting Thursday Britain was enthusiastic about the mission and the United States said Albania was a matter for Europe alone.

Court paves way for Oklahoma bomber's trial to start

DENVER (R) — A federal appeals court Friday denied three requests by Oklahoma City bombing defendant Timothy McVeigh to postpone his trial, clearing the way for it to start as scheduled Monday.

The court said that the issues raised by Mr. McVeigh's lawyers can be taken up if he is convicted.

Mr. McVeigh and former army Buddy Terry Nichols are charged in the April 19, 1995 bombing which killed 168 people. The attack on Oklahoma City's Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was the largest such assault ever on U.S. soil. The date for Mr. Nichols' trial has not yet been determined.

The court said Mr. McVeigh's attorneys were "premature" in seeking a delay on grounds of prejudicial pre-trial publicity linked to two reports published in the Dallas Morning News and Playboy magazine containing purported confessions by Mr. McVeigh.

Mr. McVeigh's lawyers had complained that U.S. District Court Judge Richard Matsch was so intent on starting the trial on time that he was willing to sacrifice Mr. McVeigh's right to a fair trial.

Mr. McVeigh's lawyers said the Dallas Morning News article was "devastating" and that "any flicker of hope that an impartial jury could be selected ... Was finally extinguished" when the Playboy article was published on the Internet.

Mr. McVeigh's lawyers said answers given by prospective jurors showed Mr. McVeigh will not be able to get a fair trial.

"The responses contained within the juror questionnaires demonstrate that Mr. McVeigh simply cannot receive a fair trial under the circumstances as they presently exist," the lawyers said. Some 1,000 notices went out to prospective jurors. Several hundred of them met with the judge and attorneys for both sides on March 19 where they filled out a questionnaire.

Internal report criticises FBI lawyer's White House dealings

WASHINGTON (R) — A U.S. Justice Department internal investigation released Friday criticised the FBI's top lawyer for poor judgment in his dealings with the Clinton White House on the FBI background files controversy.

The report by the department's office of professional responsibility found that General Counsel Howard Shapiro, a longtime associate of FBI Director Louis Freeh, made "a very serious mistake and exhibited very poor judgment."

But the internal watchdog unit concluded in the 29-page report that Mr. Shapiro's actions did not rise to the level of professional misconduct and had not been motivated "by any alleged personal or political ambitions."

Mr. Freeh said in a statement the report will be referred to an FBI board to consider what, if any, disciplinary action should be taken. A final decision on any disciplinary steps will be made by the deputy attorney general, he said.

The report comes at a time when relations between the FBI and the White House

have been especially strained as Mr. Freeh last month refused to give the White House details of Clinton's alleged efforts to influence U.S. political campaigns.

FBI sources said Mr. Shapiro, a former prosecutor and law professor, soon would leave the FBI, mainly out of concern that his staying would hurt Mr. Freeh. He has been considering several offers to go into private law practice, they said.

Mr. Shapiro said in a statement he was "gratified" the report found he did not engage in any misconduct or wrongdoing and that he had not been motivated by "any personal ambitions" or "any political agenda."

White House spokesman Mike McCurry declined comment on the report, calling it an internal Justice Department review.

The investigation began after last year's disclosure that Mr. Shapiro alerted the White House about politically damaging information in an FBI background file on former White House personnel security Chief Craig Livingstone.

Mr. Shapiro tipped off the White House's counsel's office on July 15 about a 1993 report in the file that said Mr. Livingstone had been recommended for his job by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. She had denied any role in his hiring.

The report said his action "exacerbated a political problem by contributing to the appearance that the FBI, and particularly Mr. Shapiro, was not sufficiently independent of the White House."

Congressional investigators arrived at FBI headquarters to inspect the file on July 16, but then Mr. Shapiro had sent two FBI agents to the home of agent Dennis Sculimbrene, who wrote the report, to question him about it.

The report criticised Mr. Shapiro for authorising the interview.

Investigations were underway then by Whitewater special prosecutor Kenneth Starr and Congressional committees into the White House's obtaining of hundreds of secret FBI background files, including some on prominent Republicans.

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Dialogue for benefit of all

IN HIS meeting with newspaper editors yesterday, HRH Crown Prince Hassan spoke candidly and eloquently about the challenges facing this country, whether from within or in the regional context. Just as political and socio-economic factors sometimes combine to make life difficult for us here at home, so can regional politics and international power games play havoc with the lives of all peoples in the Middle East and with any plans they might have to build a future free from the fears, the uncertainties and the conflicts that quite a few of our generations have had to endure.

The Crown Prince, with the long political experience and the vast wealth of knowledge about us and the world that he so painstakingly put together over the years, dotted the Is and crossed the Ts over what could be done to meet those challenges. He gave glaring examples of how policies, based on hard information and facts and vision, could be pursued to serve society's needs and beyond that the region's basic requirements for stability, peace and economic prosperity.

Being the humanist and the realist he is, Crown Prince Hassan forgot and overlooked no major human element that could have an impact on these policies.

On the question of Palestinian refugees, for example, he pointed out first to the responsibilities that this country has had to shoulder over the past five decades and secondly, but no less importantly, to what practical solutions we might expect for their problem and plight. Germany has been negotiating with its neighbours to this day, for over 50 years now, issues related to displacement of some of its citizens and their rights. Likewise with the issue of free movement of people in this region or even in Europe, where European governments have been discussing it for the past 40 years. The Crown Prince mentioned another example, that of the development of the Jordan Rift Valley, which has to be attained if we are to achieve growth, progress and regional cooperation. We could and should turn to the experience of joint authorities that worked on the development of the Danube and Rhine river basins and learn from their experience, he said. Interdependence, never and above the fact that it is a must in today's world, cannot depend on transient changes in government or governmental structures. It has to be employed for making sure that investments succeed in the service of human beings and their needs.

In the meeting yesterday, which was attended by seven members of the new Cabinet, Prince Hassan focused attention on our local scene and discussed with the journalists and the officials how the media can contribute a bloc or two to the efforts for building a civil, democratic and productive society. Demagoguery, divisiveness and rejectionism cannot possibly constitute the building blocs of such society. Reliance on optimal use of human and natural resources as well as economic resources, on the other hand, can take us steps forward towards achieving our goals.

The Crown Prince will today meet more representatives of the media, columnists and journalists from the tahdidi press this time, and he will probably take some officials from the new government along with him. Essentially his message will be the same: clear, visionary and to the point. Let us hope we all learn something from this dialogue and continue the process of interaction at all levels in the future. So much needs to be heard and aired out before we can claim new successes.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

TWO WEEKS have passed since the attack carried out by a Jordanian soldier on Israeli schoolgirls in Baqura, and the public is still in the dark regarding the results of the investigations and enquiry, said Fahed Fanek, in the weekly Shihan. What is more astonishing is to hear that the lawyers who volunteered to defend the soldier have not been given access to him or to attend the interrogation conducted by a military panel, he said. How can this happen in a country which claims to be abiding by democratic principles and where the rule of law prevails, asked the writer. In contrast, in Israel last year, when the late Israeli premier was assassinated, the public watched the assassin on television smiling before the cameras and enjoying himself in the stand in the court which tried him, recalled the writer. An accused remains innocent until proven guilty, and Dukausch, the Jordanian soldier who committed the shooting, should be considered innocent unless convicted by the court. During the investigations and interrogations this soldier has the right to have a lawyer present and later to defend him in court, a normal practice in democratic countries, said the writer. He said the public in Jordan has the right to be informed of the facts that emerged from the interrogation and, later, of the court's verdict.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Combating recession — a losing battle

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

ONE OF the objectives of the new government of Dr. Abdul Salam Majali is to deal with the economic recession. This is an extremely hard job, tried by several governments since mid-1993 with no luck.

At the outset one should recognise that there is no agreement among economists on the basic fact of whether or not the current economic situation in Jordan can be described as a recession. The macro-economic indicators strongly refute the existence of recession, but businessmen and professionals operating in the market confirm it vehemently.

Recession is supposed to be a temporary period, or part of a cycle, when the economy shows a zero or negative growth. In contrast, the Jordanian economy was growing during the past four years at rates ranging between a minimum of 5.2 per cent and a maximum of 8.1 per cent, or an average of 6.5 per cent a year in real terms.

Admittedly we have a problem arising from an explosion in population growth, a planned increase of compulsory savings which naturally reduces the real per capita consumption, and the distribution of the business among an increasing number of traders, doctors, pharmacists and engineers, etc.

However, we shall assume, for the purposes of this analysis, that the Jordanian economy is actually in a state

of recession and therefore examine what the new government can do to combat recession after seeing that the previous government has almost exhausted the available means to improve the investment climate and attract foreign investors with little success.

The easy solution that short-sighted politicians may like is an expansionary policy. According to this tempting approach, the Central Bank would be asked to reduce interest rates and pump more money into the market instead of withdrawing it. The Ministry of Finance, on the other hand, would be authorised to open the tap and increase public spending at the expense of higher deficit.

Under such measures, liquidity would become abundant in the market, prices of shares would shoot up, effective demand on consumption would soar and the commercial profits would rise; everyone would be happy for a while. But there is a high price for such a course of action: the economic adjustment programme would be killed, inflation would mount, imports would swell, budget deficit would deteriorate, Central Bank's foreign exchange reserve would be depleted, the trust in the local currency would stumble, capital flight would be triggered and investment would stagnate. We would be back to the crisis of 1988 in no time.

It is obvious that an expansionary policy may give

impressing results in the short term. Prosperity would follow for a short period; then the heavy price would come. This sort of policy is irresponsible, it is like treating poverty by offering liquor to the poor to feel high for the moment, knowing that it will be followed by a hangover.

Jordan witnessed recently a phenomenal prosperity which lasted for 24 months, from mid-1991 to mid-1993. The current situation may be considered a recession only in comparison with that exceptional period. That prosperity could not be reproduced again. It cost some \$2 billion, brought in by the rich returnees from Kuwait. They spent this huge amount on consumption and investments over two years.

Reproduction of this sort of demand-push prosperity would cost a minimum of \$1 billion a year. The question, therefore, is whether the government can come up with this kind of money as a peace dividend, as was thought in 1994. Hopefully the government is now wiser than making this false assumption.

In the specific circumstances of Jordan, there is no magic solution for economic recession that a new government can safely implement. The expansionary option to deal with recession has side effects which are so dangerous that no responsible government can contemplate.

For peace, Palestinians must have a place in Jerusalem

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON — When Yasser Arafat came to The New York Times for a discussion the other day, he spoke respectfully of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. "He is my partner," President Arafat said. "He's a nice man."

But then he was asked whether he had had any advance warning of Mr. Netanyahu's decision to build thousands of homes for Jews on a site in East Jerusalem. "I'm sorry to say, no," Mr. Arafat replied.

When Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres were in office, he said, he had a hot line to them — and back channels for communication. Those links were gone.

Mr. Arafat's comments, mildly phrased though they were, pointed to a real danger. For whatever political reasons of his own, Mr. Netanyahu ignored a basic requirement of the peace

process: that Israel and the Palestinians consult before acting on any sensitive issue, avoiding surprises.

When the two men reached agreement in January in Hebron, it seemed Mr. Netanyahu had turned a corner in his relationship with the Palestinian leader. There was talk of trust and partnership.

That notion was shattered by Mr. Netanyahu's sudden decision to proceed with a huge Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem. It was the opposite of mutual trust and consultation: an attempt to present the Palestinians and the world with a fait accompli on the most sensitive of issues in the peace process, Jerusalem.

An Israeli official, David Peleg, made an extraordinarily obtuse statement. He criticised the Palestinians for taking the settlement issue to the United Nations, saying that was "inconsistent with their commitment to settle all issues through negotiation." That, after Israel had sprung this decision without notice, much less negotiation.

The settlement plan is especially menacing because of its physical implications. It would cut much of East Jerusalem and its nearly 200,000 Palestinian residents off from the West Bank. It would effectively foreclose the Palestinian claim to part of Jerusalem: a claim that is supposed to be the subject of negotiation in final-status talks beginning later this month.

If Mr. Netanyahu understood what he was doing, then the logical conclusion to be drawn is that he does not after all want an Israeli-Palestinian peace. For unless Israel accepts some form of official Palestinian presence in Jerusalem, there can be no peace.

That is a strong statement, but I do not think anyone familiar with Palestinian feelings will question it. Just as history had made Jerusalem a powerful symbol for Jews, so is it an essential part of the Palestinian longing for a homeland.

If Yasser Arafat agreed to a final peace that excluded Palestinians from a place in Jerusalem, I think that peace would not survive.

Mr. Arafat's policy of non-violence and compromise with Israel would be in the greatest jeopardy. So would his own leadership. All that is so plain that

one wonders what the Israeli prime minister can be thinking. I find it hard to believe that Benjamin Netanyahu would knowingly jeopardise the great prize of peace with Israel's most intimate neighbours.

Jerusalem is not a city of peace, as it is often called, but one of bloody conflict. But I do not believe that

A solution has to begin with an understanding of what is meant, geographically, by "Jerusalem." After the 1967 war, Israel extended the municipal boundaries to a large area beyond the city. Many Israelis do not view Greater Jerusalem as non-negotiable. In a poll of 1,530 Israeli Jews, published recently, 45 per cent said they would be prepared to consider a proposal to "transfer to Palestinian sovereignty" areas previously in the West Bank that have been incorporated into Jerusalem.

Mr. Arafat indicated the other day that he might be content with a modest place in the city. He gave the example of Rome as a city with two sovereigns in it, Italy and Vatican City. Which one of you would be the Vatican? he was asked. He answered: "I don't care."

Responsible Israelis and Palestinians have charted ways to deal with Jerusalem in a final peace.

The New York Times

'New pragmatism necessary if territorial agreement is to be achieved'

By David Newman

The writer is professor of political geography and director of the Humphrey Institute for Social Research at Ben-Gurion University. The following article is reprinted from the English-language daily The Jerusalem Post.

EVER SINCE Oslo 2 was signed in autumn 1995, Israelis have been subjected to a multitude of proposals regarding the final territorial disposition between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Politicians, academics and interested political groups have treated us to a display of cartographic ingenuity, drawing lines in a multitude of shapes and positions, dissecting the West Bank into various Jewish and Arab territorial entities.

The name of the game in all these proposals has been pretty much the same. Each has tried to include the largest possible number of Israeli settlements on as

small a piece of territory as possible — a logic that isn't hard to understand. Within Israel, a growing proportion of the public — from the left and right wing — has slowly come to realise that Israel will not be able, even if it wants, to evacuate 140,000 settlers without giving rise to substantial civil unrest and internal violence. This has also been intrinsically recognised in the cross-party agreement reached between Yossi Beilin and Michael Eitan.

Recent press advertisements supporting this proposal have categorically stated the desire to leave all settlements in situ. Such a position is acceptable to the Likud MKs because of their ideological stance in favour of settlements: at the same time it constitutes a major compromise on the part of the Labour MKs.

But even the latter recognise the difficulty involved in any attempts to remove or evacuate these settlements. While this explains the

growing political consensus around retaining the maximum number of settlements, there is, equally, a growing awareness on the part of Israeli policy makers that this should include as small a part of the West Bank land area as possible.

For the Palestinians, any attempt to retain settlements as part of Israel means less territory on which to establish their state.

Hard as it may be for many Israelis to appreciate, the Palestinians' demand for a state encompassing the whole of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is, for them, a major concession.

By making such a demand they are publicly acknowledging that they no longer see the whole of pre-state Palestine as their future political homeland.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip make up approximately 23 per cent of the whole of Palestine west of the River Jordan. Any further attrition within that limited territory will be strongly contested by the Palestinian negotiators in the next

round. Among all the proposals drawn up during the past year, the Beilin-Abu Mazen document for the first time suggests a solution to this problem.

Rather than simply reducing the amount of territory available to a Palestinian entity/state, the proposal suggests compensating the PNA with an equal area in less sensitive regions, ones not populated by Israeli settlements.

The idea of territorial reciprocity — namely that the Palestinians be compensated for any territorial attrition within the West Bank — is totally new to the ongoing political discourse.

Like many other such concepts, not least the notion of a Palestinian state, it will meet much opposition to begin with; but it will gradually become part of the accepted give-and-take between the two sides.

The Beilin-Abu Mazen document is particularly innovative in proposing the expansion of the Gaza land area, rather than the West Bank itself, as part of this territorial reciprocity. This solves two major problems — one Israeli, one Palestinian.

From the Israeli perspective, any change of the "Green Line" boundary could only come at the expense of the West Bank, not within Israel itself.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to delineate any area along the course of the Green Line which could be redrawn in favour of the PNA. This would be much easier to accomplish in and around the Gaza Strip where there is more land available for this form of cartographic innovation.

From the Palestinian perspective, the Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated micro-regions anywhere on the earth's surface. International groups have prepared a number of documents pointing to the need to expand the Gaza land base if it is to absorb the existing population economically. There has even been talk about expanding the Gaza area to include

small pieces of adjoining territory both within Israel and Egypt.

What is clear is that a new pragmatism is emerging. Each side recognises that the "other" has constraints which will prevent it implementing policies that meet severe opposition at home.

An Israeli decision to evacuate too many settlements, or Palestinian acquiescence in accepting territory amounting to less than the West Bank and Gaza Strip, are equally problematic for an Israeli or Palestinian government respectively.

New ideas and concepts are necessary if a final territorial agreement is to be achieved. There is nothing holy about the artificially-drawn boundaries of 1948 making them any more, or less, valid than any other agreed line of separation between an Israeli and Palestinian entity.

It remains for both sides to exercise their respective cartographic imaginations and draw up a final line of demarcation between them.

'If we bulldoze Har Homa, we will be sacrificing our chances for peace'

By Hillel Bardin

The writer, active for 10 years in Jewish-Arab neighbourhood projects in Jerusalem, is a board member of the Rapprochement Dialogue Centre and the Jerusalem Information Centre. The article below is reprinted from The Jerusalem Post.

WHY DO we Israelis view the newly approved Jewish neighbourhood of Har Homa in "Jerusalem" so differently from the way the entire world perceives it?

Since 1967 we Israelis have successfully convinced the entire Jewish people of our non-negotiable rights to any land which our Knesset shall declare to be "Jerusalem."

In 1967 we annexed the lands of 28 newly con-

quered Palestinian villages to Jerusalem (and therefore to the state of Israel), increasing East Jerusalem's area 12-fold, and tripling the size of "Jerusalem."

What, in fact, constitutes the limits of Jerusalem, the city for which we have prayed throughout the generations?

By attaching the hallowed name "Jerusalem" to Arab villages with no historical connection to the Holy City, and to any piece of Palestinian real estate we coveted for our own use, we have convinced our people that these are part of our "eternal capital."

When we wanted the isolated hill of Jabal Abu Ghneim, four miles south of the Old City, in 1967, we simply expanded Jerusalem's municipal boundary to gobble it up, called it "Jerusalem" and

convinced ourselves that this hill was now ours on which to build Har Homa, since it was now part of the Holy Jerusalem.

Similarly, Israel is preparing to expand Jerusalem again to include the largest settlement in the West Bank, Ma'aleh Adumim, far to the East, and settlements to the north and south, and in this way to change their status from controversial settlements to what we call "new Jewish neighbourhoods" in the Holy City. By applying the tool of "administrative holiness" to Arab lands, we have succeeded in making them non-negotiable in our own eyes.

In 1967 we faced a major decision: Should we truly unite Jerusalem, by treating all its residents as equals, or should we Judaise East Jerusalem by taking away

the Palestinians' lands and settling Jews on them, by restricting Palestinian families' rights to build for themselves on their own lands, and by driving them out of Jerusalem with draconian bureaucratic measures?

Should we use Palestinians' real-estate taxes to provide them with equal education, or should we spend their tax moneys to further Jewish children's education, while preparing Arab children as cheap labour for our menial jobs?

Our conception has always been that the Palestinians are our enemies in an endless war of physical survival, our rivals for scarce resources like land, water and budgets. We therefore decided to pay lip-service to a uniting city, while repressing the Palestinian residents,

Palestinians who live without privacy — entire families in a single room — who own land and have the means to build decent homes, are forbidden to build; if they build anyway, their houses are destroyed.

Today, we live in a completely divided Jerusalem, where Jew and Arab are afraid to enter each other's area, and where the Palestinians are a hated minority with minimal human rights.

If the U.S. and the world care for justice in this city, they will insist that we suspend all settlement activity until after the negotiation of a peace treaty with our Palestinian neighbours.

If we bulldoze the Palestinians in Har Homa today, we will be sacrificing our chances for a just and lasting peace.

Regent: King's talks in U.S. are of strategic importance

(Continued from page 1)

of seven Israeli girls during the Baqoura incident in northern Jordan on March 13, the Regent said that there appears to be a need for the media to address the basic issues of knowledge and ethics.

The Prince noted that some rejectionist elements were trying to turn the case of the accused soldier, Ahmad Dakamseh, into a political one.

"How could they reconcile the political with the judicial," the Prince asked, adding that those who seek peace in the region should not only see the current situation as a conflict involving the Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis.

"The confrontation is between moderation and radicalism" in both sides — Israeli and Arab," the Prince said.

The negotiations between the Arab and Israeli sides are complex and a final solution to the question of Palestine and its consequences will not be found in a short time, he pointed out.

"The issues of Jerusalem and refugees will take a long time to resolve."

However, the Arab side, especially the Palestinians should not get embroiled in tactical issues but should focus on their strategic goal which is the total withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories including Jerusalem, he said.

"I see a great difference between settlement and housing projects," the Prince said in reference to Israel's decision to build a new settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim.

He noted that the Arabs should not concentrate their international effort on opposing the building of settlements in Jerusalem's environs alone, but should protest against the whole Israeli settlement policies.

Had the effort at the U.N. Security Council been directed at extracting a resolution condemning the illegal building of settlements by Israel per se it might have succeeded, he said. "It probably was not wise to single out the Jabal

Abu Ghneim settlement at the Security Council."

The meeting addressed all issues that need clarification including the trip of Dennis Ross, the American special envoy to the Middle East, and the scope of relations between the U.S. and Iraq.

The Crown Prince also explained in detail the reasons behind Israel's request to speed up final negotiations with the Palestinian National Authority and the effect of that on the whole peace process.

The Crown Prince described the immense Jordanian effort shouldered by King Hussein since the Hebron agreement and which will continue to provide a suitable environment

that will allow the peace process to reach its goals.

The Crown Prince also reviewed the results of his recent trip to Gaza and meeting with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

He explained the scope of Arab cooperation and the necessity to move towards positive development of Arab relations in a manner that will suit the changes of the era.

He concentrated on Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation which allows Jordan to maintain its consistent role in support of the Palestinian people until they achieve their rights on their national soil.

He also clarified the value of the whole region internationally and which

constitutes one of the most important factors of the new American strategy.

He explained that this strategy is based upon three pivots: oil, security and Israel.

He also clarified the necessity to care for the collective human dimension.

In addition, he praised Jordan's partnership with Europe and its vital and positive role.

He also summed up the dimensions of Jordan's relationship with neighbouring Islamic countries.

He reviewed the current issues which occupy the interest of local public opinion and the role of the press in enlightening the people of such issues from

a national point of view.

"Most of our local causes demand accuracy and care because the social, political and economical development needs us to support the value of nationalism and public interest and to abandon all negative aspects which do not see but the points of weakness without studying the causes and without exerting the effort to find solutions," he said.

His Royal Highness asked the media to continue in its role of objective criticism, to publicise the values of the homeland and to truly and thoroughly care for the causes of Jordanians.

Afterwards, Dr. Ensour, Minister of Education and

Higher Education Munther Masri, Minister of Interior Nasser Rashid, Minister of Justice Riyad Shak'a, Minister of Health Asraf Kurdi, and Minister of State for Information Affairs Sameer Mutaweh talked about issues that concern their ministries and described to the representatives of the media the programmes of the new government and the way the government is handling certain cases and issues.

The members of the press talked about the vital causes of the homeland and professional matters. They praised the positive environment which allows communication with the Hashemite leadership.

Committee gives JD1,000 to family of soldier, invites donations

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A group of political activists said Saturday its members evaded a "security net" and handed over JD 1,000 to the family of the Jordanian soldier who opened fire on Israeli schoolgirls in Baqoura on March 12.

The "Jordanian Popular Committee for the Defence of Soldier Ahmad Dakamseh" had collected the sum from sympathisers of the corporal, who killed seven Israeli schoolgirls and wounded five others in the attack, said Riyad Nawayseh, a former member of Parliament.

An eight-member group representing the committee visited the Dakamseh family in Etdir village in the north after evading what Jordan Engineers Association (JEA) President Leith Shbeilat described as security roadblocks.

Mr. Shbeilat said the group could meet only with Cpl. Dakamseh's mother, sister and wife because "male members of the family, who were informed in advance of the visit and who welcomed it, were not present in the house."

"The Dakamseh family and the whole village are under security control," said Mr. Shbeilat, adding that no one can enter or leave the village without being questioned by security forces. He said the male members of the family were asked by the security forces not to be present in the house when the group visited.

In addition to Mr. Nawayseh and Mr. Shbeilat, the group included Hanan Saad, an Islamic Action Front (IAF) deputy, a former judge Najib Rashdan and senior JEA official Ali Abu Sukkar. The names of the others were not immediately available.

The "Jordanian Popular Committee for the Defence of Soldier Ahmad Dakamseh" meanwhile announced a campaign to collect funds for the Dakamseh family.

The president of the committee is Najib Rashdan, current president of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights. Deputy Sa'id, Mr. Nawayseh, Mr. Shbeilat, Mr. Abu Sukkar, Jordan Bar Association President Hussein Mjalli, former Prime Minister Ahmad Obidat, and Hakem Favez, a political activist.

JBA upset over failure to secure Dakamseh defence

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan Bar Association (JBA) is angered that an independent lawyer rather than a JBA-appointed team will defend the Jordanian soldier, who shot and killed seven Israeli schoolgirls and injured eight in a March 13 attack in Baqoura.

The JBA, a strong opponent of normalisation of relations with Israel, contended that the role as an umbrella body for all lawyers in Jordan to justify itself as the sole authorised body to defend Corporal Ahmad Dakamseh.

The authorisation, says a JBA member, came from all professional associations and unions and political parties which share the JBA's platform against normalisation of ties with Israel.

Since the day of the Baqoura attack, the JBA, had been active in organising a defence team for the soldier.

As such, it came as a surprise to many JBA members when it was known last week that Ahmad Najdawi would defend Cpl. Dakamseh in court.

JBA President Hussein Mjalli told the Jordan Times that he met with Prime Minister Abdul

Salam Majali as well as Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh demanding the right to meet Cpl. Dakamseh before the case was referred to Mr. Najdawi.

Accusations between the two parties were ignited when Mr. Najdawi, the first lawyer to volunteer to defend Cpl. Dakamseh was called Monday by the military prosecutor general and received the power of attorney from the soldier.

"Both parties have promised to look into the issue," said Mr. Mjalli, who is a member of the pro-Syria Baath Party and who also met the soldier's family last week.

Mr. Najdawi said the JBA was utilising the issue as a political statement due to public's sympathy towards the soldier. He also said that while the JBA was busy in launching a media campaign he had volunteered to defend Cpl. Dakamseh by applying through all the legal channels.

"On March 15 I was the first lawyer to ask the public prosecutor in an official letter to defend Ahmad and on March 23 I met my client who was suspicious at the beginning," said Mr. Najdawi.

Mr. Najdawi was a member of the defence team in the Leith Shbeilat case and has been responsible for most of the cases related to

the bread riots which took place in August last year.

Mr. Najdawi, who met the soldier twice since receiving the power of attorney, said that the soldier's questioning was not over yet and that he will receive the results of the investigation in 10 days.

He said the investigation focused on the reasons behind the attack, and that once the case is referred to the military court he will attend the questioning.

Cpl. Dakamseh, 28, a father of three, was arrested immediately after the attack. He has been in custody for the past 12 days without meeting a lawyer. The soldier has confessed to his crime.

According to the Jordanian law, Cpl. Dakamseh has the right not to answer the prosecutor general's question unless his lawyer is present. If Cpl. Dakamseh refused to assign a lawyer or his lawyer is not present in the first 24 hours, the questioning in emergency cases could take place. But the accused will not sign his statements unless his attorney is present.

Cpl. Dakamseh will face trial in a military court. However, the major difference between a military and civil courts in this case is that the military verdicts cannot be appealed.

Islamists stand out in demands for changes in electoral system

(Continued from page 1)

"The criteria to be used in the redrawing of the electoral districts should take into account density of population," Dr. Farhan urged, warning the government not to encourage "tribalism and regionalism."

Their original demand for the abolition of the one-person, one-vote system irremediably frustrated by January's endorsement of the 1993 temporary electoral law by the Lower House, the Islamists seem determined to put pressure on the government to obtain at least an equal redistribution of the electoral districts.

"We have always been against the very first idea of the one-person, one-vote system," Dr. Farhan told the Jordan Times, adding that the IAF is now expecting the laying of new constituencies to allow a "fair" representation.

"We are watching the government very close, and we have not yet issued an official statement only because we want to make sure of what they are going

to do [with the constituencies]," said Dr. Farhan.

Accusing the government of "disclosing in bits and pieces its intentions regarding the election law," Dr. Farhan said "it is time that the cabinet expose to the public what it has in its drawers."

He called on the minister of interior to "lay open the map" of the new constituencies as soon as possible, so that it could be discussed and evaluated by the citizens.

"As our initial demands could not be met, (the abolition of the one-person, one-vote formula), what we are now worried about is the redrawing of the constituencies."

Dr. Akaleh told the Jordan Times in a telephone interview on Saturday.

"What the IAF wants is that the number of electoral districts be equal to the number of seats in the Lower House," he reiterated.

While describing the government's refusal to lower the voting age and increase the number of parliamentary seats as "a bad sign," IAF leaders suggested they consider

the new Majali government less open to their requests than its predecessor.

Noting that the previous government of Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti had pledged to increase the number of deputies and lower the voting age, IAF Deputy Abdul Latif Arabyat depicted Mr. Rashid's statement as "a step backward" in the way towards a "modern and more democratic" electoral law.

In a statement to the Lower House before the voting on the one-person, one-vote system in January, Mr. Kabariti had promised a new law addressing major issues like constituencies, a discussed, though never officially proposed, quota for women, the number of deputies and the mechanism for holding the elections.

"The previous government promised people to develop a proper and modern election law, but the current government is running short below the aspirations of all political parties, including the IAF," Dr. Farhan said.

Albright comments could boost Saddam

(Continued from page 1)

block the efforts of the international community to lift the embargo imposed on Iraq," Mr. Hammadi said.

"Pushed by the Zionist lobby, the American administration has opted for confrontation rather than dialogue with Iraq," he said, warning the U.S. that "the path of confrontation would lead only to failure."

Another official Iraqi newspaper, Al Jumhuriya, also slammed Mrs. Albright's

comments accusing her of "doing the bidding of a mafia which runs a great country."

Mr. Hammadi also said it was better for the U.S. administration to choose "the road of dialogue" with Iraq rather than the "road of confrontation."

"It is correct the language of (Mrs. Albright's) statement is insolent... But it is also right that the language of insolence expresses failure, disability and frustration," Mr. Hammadi wrote.

Ensour, Moroccan envoy hold talks

AMMAN (Petra) — Acting Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister for Services and Minister of Administrative Development Abdullah Ensour on Saturday received Moroccan Ambassador in Amman Abdul Hameed Kittani and discussed with him bilateral relations and means of developing them in all fields. Dr. Ensour and Mr. Kittani stressed the need to give impetus to the peace process, they also focussed on administrative cooperation between the two countries.

Spanish minister 'serious' in hospital

MADRID (R) — Spanish Foreign Minister Abel Matutes was taken to hospital on Saturday suffering from chest pains and was in serious condition, a hospital statement said. Mr. Matutes, 55, was in intensive care at the hospital on the Spanish Mediterranean island of Ibiza after being admitted in the early hours of the morning, the hospital said. Local news reports said Mr. Matutes had been on Easter vacation.

Sharjah gives \$1m to Palestine

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Saturday donated another \$1 million for Palestinians to upgrade health services in the West Bank town of Hebron. Sheikh Sultan Ben Mohammad Al Qassimi, ruler of Sharjah which is one of the seven emirates making up the UAE, made the donation for Al Ahli Hospital and to build an orphanage in the city, said the official news agency WAM. Earlier this week, President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan decided on \$3 million worth of food aid to the Palestinians in the autonomous West Bank and Gaza Strip.



Palestinians carry Abdullah Khalil Salah, a 21-year-old Palestinian student who was killed by an Israeli soldier in Ramallah on the eve of "Land Day" on Saturday (AFP photo)

PNA wants Hamas to halt attacks

(Continued from page 1)

on their feelings and frustrate them," said Mr. Musa. "The core of the problem is in the Israeli measures which provoke the frustration of the Palestinian people and provoke many states and Muslim people," he added.

Fears of a new upsurge in violence were stoked by George Habash, leader of the Damascus-based opposition group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

Mr. Habash, whose organisation is opposed to the Oslo peace accords with Israel, called Saturday for a new civil uprising in the Palestinian territories similar to the 1987-1993 intifada.

"There will be neither

peace nor stability with the continued occupation of Jerusalem, we appeal to the Palestinian people to intensify the confrontation with Israel) and to kickstart the intifada by burning the ground under the feet of the occupiers," Mr. Habash told AFP.

Hamas wins elections

Supporters of Hamas swept elections for the engineering association of Gaza and Hamas' co-founder now heads the group, association officials said on Saturday.

They said Hamas won eight seats. Mr. Arafat's Fateh faction took two seats and one seat was won by an independent in the Friday poll.

Palestinians said the

results reflected frustration with the crisis in the peace process.

Ismail Abu Shanab, who founded Hamas along with Sheikh Ahmad Yassin in the 1980s, was released from an Israeli prison several months ago after serving an eight-year sentence for Hamas affiliation and is now association chairman.

"Many people are frustrated with the peace deal and disappointed at the Palestinians' situation," a Fateh member of the association said.

Pundits had expected Fateh to make a better showing.

After the last polls in 1993, seats on the group's board were split equally between Hamas and Fateh.

Israel, Palestinians await U.S. move to resolve crisis

(Continued from page 1)

ding up a "code of conduct" which would bar any use of violence and a mechanism which would prevent disputes in the peace process from degenerating into confrontations.

"Israel accepts such a procedure on the level of security officials. But it wants to be sure that the Palestinian Authority is committed to fighting terrorism before Israel resumes a deep political dialogue," he said.

Mr. Ross underlined that there "cannot be a continuation of terror and violence" while efforts are underway to defuse the crisis.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the U.S. envoy made no requests for Israeli concessions to the Palestinians during their meeting on Friday.

Mr. Netanyahu said Mr. Ross, who met Mr. Arafat in Morocco on Thursday, had received a verbal commitment from the Palestinian leader against the violence, but the prime minister insisted Mr. Arafat back up the words with action on the ground.

The Israeli premier has accused Mr. Arafat of giving a "green light" to militants who claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing on March 20 that killed three Israeli women in Tel Aviv.

"What is needed is the implementation of the agreements and the return to the negotiating table without any preconditions or restrictions," Mr. Abu Rdaiah said in Gaza as Mr. Arafat returned from Cairo.

"The new Israeli conditions are not acceptable."

Mr. Netanyahu demanded Mr. Arafat arrest militants, dismantle guerrilla groups and tighten cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian security forces.

Mr. Arafat, asked by reporters if Mr. Ross in their meeting in Rabat on Thursday, had asked him to calm tensions in authority areas abutting Israeli army positions where there have been clashes since Israel broke ground on the settlement, said:

"Yes, they are against the violence, especially the violence of settlement and the Judaisation of Jerusalem."

The White House called Mr. Ross' emergency shuttle "constructive" but said more work was needed.

Cabinet discusses current issues

(Continued from page 1)

abide by the regulations by May 31 will be asked to leave and pay the fines before departure. According to Dr. Mutaweh, the Council of Ministers discussed a number of recommendations aimed at facilitating entry and exit of travellers through airports and border posts and decided on practical steps to be taken by the concerned ministers in this regard.

Another point for discussion, he said, was the government's present equities in local newspapers, adding that the question was referred to the Bureau for the Interpretation of Laws. He

said that the government will take the appropriate decision in the light of the bureau's interpretation.

The minister was quoted in the Arabic-language Al Dustour daily as saying that the government was dutybound to reduce its shares in newspaper establishments to 30 per cent by June 17, 30 days after the related law was published in the official gazette.

Minister of Industry and Trade Hani Mulki submitted a report to the council on the agreement on investments concluded with the U.S. government.

Ammari highlights Jordan's privatisation and economic globalisation endeavours

AMMAN (Petra) — Delegates from 12 Arab states Saturday opened a 10-day seminar entitled "Global Economy and its Impact on Privatisation Programmes in the Arab World" at Amra Hotel to discuss market economy, plans for privatising state-owned corporations and trends of world trade.

Deputising for Planning Minister Rima Khalaf at the opening ceremony, Ministry of Planning Secretary General Nabil Ammari said that the meeting coincides with current moves by different nations to remove barriers to world trade and that it comes at a time when

various countries are moving more and more towards privatising state-owned institutions and conduct free trade with other countries.

Referring to Jordan's endeavours in this respect, Dr. Ammari said that Jordan has been keen to adopt steps leading to openness to global economy and has been negotiating to become a member of the World Trade Organisation and that the Kingdom will soon join the European Union through partnership in free trade.

With regard to measures leading towards the coming stage, he said the government has restructured the

country's customs tariffs system, introduced legislation and laws to facilitate trade exchanges, gave due support for the Amman Financial Market and was in the process of introducing new laws to encourage competitiveness, prevent monopoly and give incentives to investors.

The government has taken steps towards privatising state-owned entities as part of an overall economic reform programme and has facilitated Jordan's integration with the global economy, said Dr. Ammari at the meeting which was organised by the Kuwait-based Arab Institute for Planning

in cooperation with the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy (JID).

Dr. Issa Gbazali, director of the Arab Institute for Planning outlined the institute's programmes noting that it plays a key role in promoting inter-Arab economic integration through research programmes, training of personnel in economic affairs and planning of socio-economic development programmes.

JID President Mazen Armouti said that the rapid developments in world economies and the revolution in the communications and the exchange of information and the emergence of regional economic blocs have all made the world look like a small village.

Global economy entails integrating a nation's economy with those of the other countries economically, politically and culturally, according to Dr. Armouti.

Through privatisation and market economy systems, he added, a nation's economy will be free-wheeling towards integration into the global economy.

Countries represented at the seminar are Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Lebanon, Sudan, Egypt, Mauritania, Algeria, Morocco.



Participants listen to one of the speakers at the seminar (Petra photo)



Nabil Ammari (seated centre) at the opening of the seminar Saturday (Petra photo)

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Plan a short trip today you've been thinking about and make the effort to make it a reality. This could be very beneficial to you, however, count the cost well and be sure to travel light in the process.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You can easily handle an arrangement with your mate today which has been troubling you for some time. You should think before you act later this evening and thereby avoiding any difficulties which could be present.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You can put your best foot forward today where public matters are concerned. Reach a long-overdue agreement later this evening with your fellow associates and thereby make this time quite beneficial for all.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) A dissatisfied fellow associate may seem to be grumbling about nothing today, however, this person's perception is actually quite good. Later this evening will be good for you to meet with bigwigs for some business advice.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You are highly creative at this time and you should take advantage of this ability. You can get good results from a calculated risk if you move quickly and take advantage of the situation which can be quite successful.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Invite your superiors into your home today and entertain them well, thereby creating an atmosphere of success. Be sure to make a good impression, as they can be of great help to you in your career activities.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Be direct and accurate when speaking with fellow associates today, and you can get some surprising results. Catch up on your correspondence which has fallen behind and thereby create the impression of success.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Carry through with some course of action today to improve your financial situation which you began the other day. This should be a great day and evening to entertain special guests and make them feel welcome.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your judgement is very accurate today and you may see many opportunities which others miss. Take charge of your life at this time and thereby make your career activities more successful and prosperous.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This is a good day today to go after the information you need to finish up some business projects. Consider the needs of your mate later this evening and do what he or she desires, thereby creating a sense of harmony.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Put your gregarious nature forward today and contact as many friends as possible so that you can enjoy some recreational activities. A group affair with old friends would be ideal tonight, so make the effort.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Make a point to please some influential people you know today, and gain their support for your career activities. You can improve your credit greatly with a bigwig if you pursue business activities with aggression.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper.

Iran's oil revenues exceed target by \$3.5b

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's oil revenues were higher than anticipated during the year which ended in March and the outlook for the current year is bright despite U.S. economic sanctions, Oil Minister Gholamreza Aghazadeh has said.

In a statement broadcast by state television, Mr. Aghazadeh said that oil revenues for the Iranian calendar year which ended on March 20 were \$3.5 billion higher than the \$14 billion target.

He said the average price of a barrel of Iranian crude was \$19 during the period.

"Between March 1996 and March 1997 prices remained high for several

reasons, particularly the harsh winter in the West and the delay in Iraq's return to the market," the Iranian oil minister said.

Iran, a leading member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), currently produces 3.6 million barrels of oil per day (bpd) and exports an average of 2.5 million bpd.

Oil is the country's chief source of foreign exchange and oil receipts account for around 40 per cent of government income.

Mr. Aghazadeh said that oil revenues were forecast at \$18 billion in the current Iranian calendar year and the Islamic republic should meet the target.

"We will not experience any problems selling our crude exports on the world market," he said, despite the economic embargo imposed on Iran by the United States.

The United States, which accuses Tehran of backing international terrorism, slapped economic sanctions on the Islamic republic in June 1995 and tightened them further in August of last year, threatening to punish foreign firms which invest more than \$40 million in Iran's oil and gas industry.

"Thanks to good marketing, long-term contracts and diverse markets. We are in a good position to sell our

oil," Mr. Aghazadeh said, adding that "there would be no problems" with output.

He said slight fluctuations were expected but it is "unlikely that oil prices will fall during the next 12 months."

"Taking into account the fact that parliament revised the price per barrel downwards in our budget estimates we should have no problem in reaching our oil revenue targets," he said.

In drawing up the budget for the year beginning March 20, Iran's Islamic parliament forecast the average price per barrel at \$17.50, a figure which some Iranian oil experts have described as optimistic.

In January, a member of the board of directors of the National Iranian Oil Company, expressed doubt over whether the 1997-98 target could be reached.

REUTERS The Business of Information

| Major Currencies & Cross Rates | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|
| Currency | USD | DEM | GBP | CHF | JPY | CAD | ITL | NLG | FRF |
| US Dollar | 1.0000 | 1.6780 | 0.6135 | 1.4500 | 123.90 | 1.3708 | 1675.23 | 1.8670 | 6.5530 |
| DE Mark | 0.5965 | 1.0000 | 0.6563 | 1.3563 | 163.33 | 1.3708 | 1675.23 | 1.8670 | 6.5530 |
| GB Sterling | 1.6300 | 2.7310 | 1.0000 | 2.3649 | 201.18 | 2.2487 | 2730.62 | 3.0758 | 9.2307 |
| CHF Franc | 0.6880 | 1.1353 | 0.4227 | 1.0000 | 136.37 | 0.7556 | 1133.57 | 1.2364 | 3.5401 |
| JP Yen | 0.0081 | 0.1353 | 0.4948 | 1.1698 | 1.0000 | 0.0090 | 11.352 | 0.0124 | 0.0074 |
| CAD Dollar | 0.7274 | 1.2420 | 0.4392 | 1.0893 | 110.90 | 1.0000 | 125.36 | 1.3607 | 3.5401 |
| IT Lira | 0.0006 | 1.0007 | 0.3657 | 0.0865 | 1354.10 | 0.0027 | 1.0000 | 11.25 | 3.3771 |
| FR Franc | 0.1786 | 0.2963 | 0.1083 | 0.2502 | 21.86 | 0.2436 | 33.32 | 33.3200 | 1.0000 |

| Energy | | | Mid-East Currencies | | | | |
|--------|--------|----------|---------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| Oil | Last | Previous | Currency | USD | DEM | GBP | CHF |
| Brent | 18.55 | 18.50 | SA Riyal | 0.2667 | 0.4476 | 0.16359 | 0.38891 |
| Bony | 18.55 | 18.50 | KW Dinar | 3.2958 | 5.54017 | 2.02429 | 4.76698 |
| UL Gas | 205.00 | 205.00 | CY Pound | 1.9877 | 3.3354 | 1.2191 | 2.8522 |

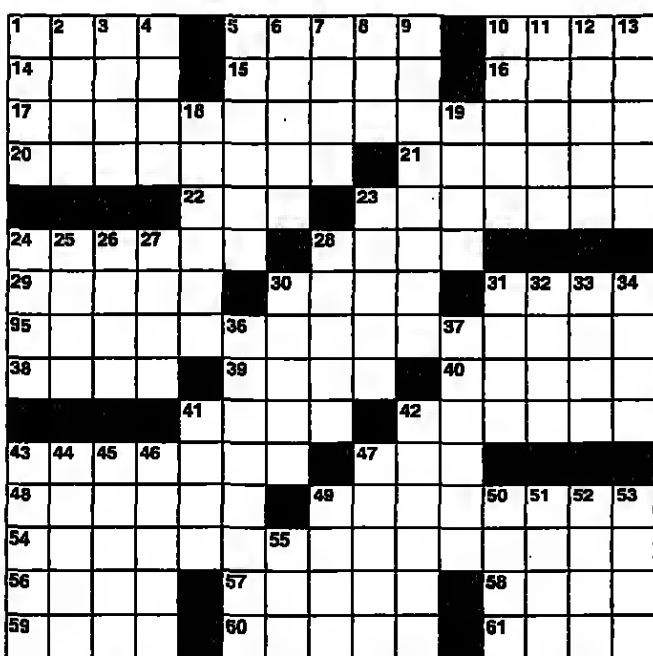
| Metal Prices | | | Currency Deposit Rates (Bid) | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|------|
| Metal | Bid | Offer | Period | -1- | -3- | -6- | -9- |
| Gold (oz) | 348.5 | 350 | Cncy | Month | Months | Months | Year |
| Platinum (oz) | 373 | 378 | USD | 5.57 | 5.65 | 5.82 | 6.00 |
| AG (3 Months) | 1642 | 1645 | JPY | 0.58 | 0.58 | 0.52 | 0.51 |
| CU (3 Months) | 2370 | 2375 | DEM | 3.39 | 3.39 | 3.39 | 3.39 |
| Zinc (3 Months) | 1482 | 1487 | FRF | 3.23 | 3.25 | 3.32 | 3.36 |
| Lead (3 Months) | 684 | 687 | ITL | 7.22 | 7.32 | 7.35 | 7.28 |
| Ni (3 Months) | 3740 | 3748 | | | | | |

| Main Equity Indices | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|-------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| Bourse | Index | Value | Chng | % Chng | High | Low | Pf Cls |
| New York | DOW JONES | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| London | FT-SE 100 | 4312.9 | 11.4 | 0.27 | 4331.4 | 4303.9 | 4301.5 |
| Paris | CAC 40 | 2856.88 | 7.95 | 0.3 | 2867.54 | 2847.00 | 2848.73 |
| Frankfurt | DAX | 3722.25 | 10.35 | 0.3 | 3742.38 | 3715.45 | 3718.22 |

| Energy | | | JOD Cross Rates | | |
|----------------|-------|----------|-----------------|--------|--------|
| Commodity | Last | Delivery | Currency | Buy | Sell |
| Coffee (c/lbs) | 196.5 | Spot | US Dollar | 0.708 | 0.710 |
| Sugar (c/lbs) | 309 | Spot | DE Mark | 0.4218 | 0.4237 |
| Soya (c/lbs) | 23.17 | Spot | FR Franc | 0.125 | 0.1256 |
| Barley (c/lbs) | 0 | Spot | NL Guilder | 0.3749 | 0.3768 |

THE Daily Crossword

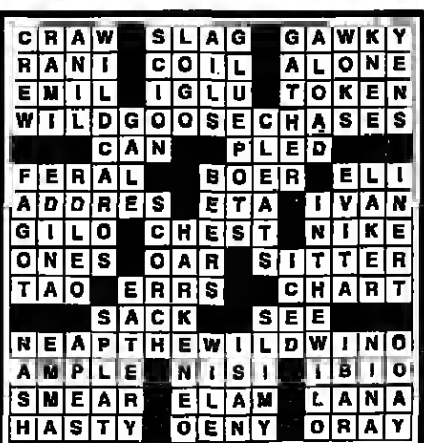
- ACROSS**
- Bird crop
 - Second-stringer
 - Reindrop
 - Core
 - Upright
 - Grimm figure
 - 1954/1966 films
 - Bench decree
 - Act as attorney
 - Paulo
 - Jai alai balls
 - Lymphoid mass
 - Olympian Lewis
 - Included
 - French father
 - Ruby and Sander
 - 1953/1942 films
 - Information
 - Some paintings
 - Vive —
 - Medicore
 - Least polite
 - Charm
 - D.C. dept.
 - African river
 - Lending institution
 - 1978/1990 films
 - Interlock
 - More adept
 - Musical piece
 - Annual last word
 - Coward and Hemison
 - Try out



by Richard Thomas

- DOWN**
- Book experts?
 - Go up
 - Env. abbr.
 - "— is so rare..."
 - Cord kind
 - Whitefish
 - Dramatist David
 - Número —
 - Was on the edge
 - Very successful
 - White wader
 - Game site
 - Legal documents
 - Step down
 - Actress Carter

- Left Bank — location
- Field cover
- Melville title
- Hunter Hideo
- Easy task
- Fiddle kin
- Like Easter eggs
- Pennell's country
- Sett's son
- State of agitation
- Geng tough
- Former coed
- Placard
- Coxswain's companions
- Resists stubbornly
- Black
- Street kid
- Meld



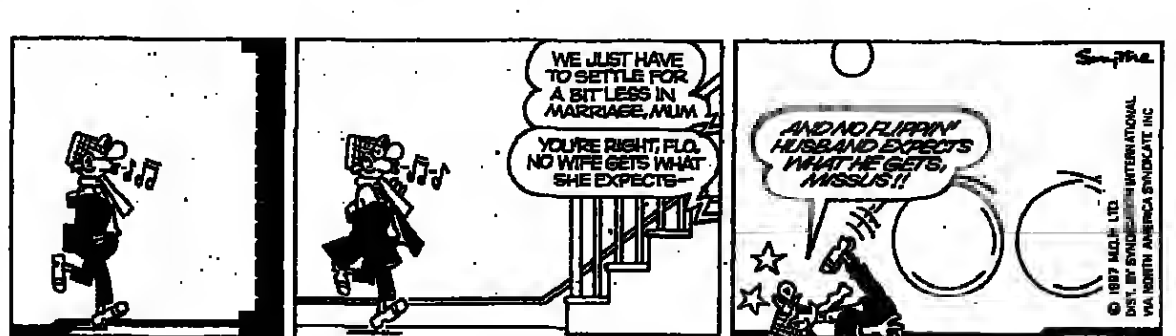
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- Dromedary
- Furlong marker
- Narrow opening
- "Chicago —"
- Encumbrance
- Initiant
- Cable network letters

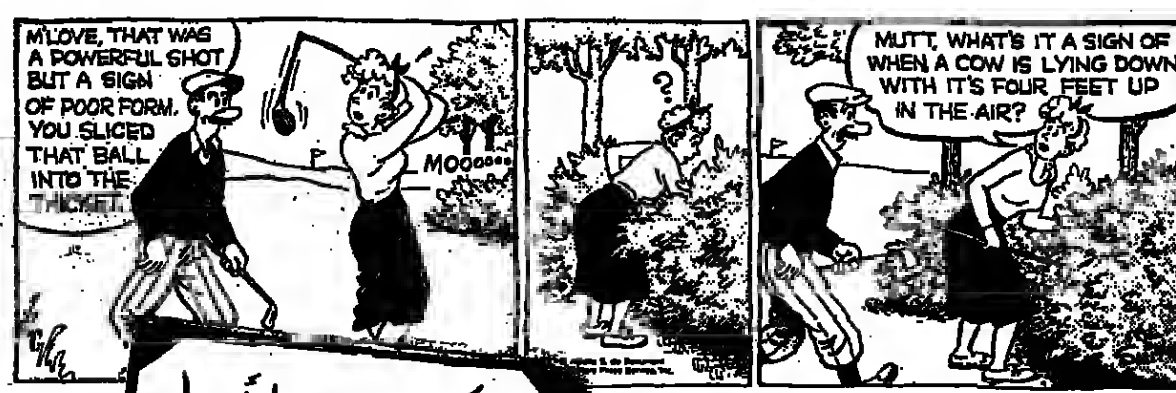
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Ensour, Anani stress need to introduce temporary laws to activate economy

AMMAN (J.T.) — Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour was quoted as saying at a meeting with Parliament members over the weekend that there was need for the government to introduce temporary laws stressing that the absence of legislations, especially those that tackle economic issues, was bound to harm the national economy.

"We are meeting to exchange views and to consult each other about draft economic laws which could not be finalised by the past sessions of the Lower House of Parliament," said Dr. Ensour at the meeting which was attended by some deputies, including House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Sour as well as Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, and members of the House's Finance Committee.

"We realise that some deputies are against the government introducing temporary laws but the continued absence of economic laws is hurting the economy," stressed Dr. Ensour.

His view was echoed by Dr. Anani who said that in its final session, Parliament has endorsed the

country's companies law but this law can not be enforced without a law on securities.

He said that Parliament was not able to pass the law on securities due to insufficient time and, as such, the work of many companies remains on hold until the draft law on securities is endorsed.

Dr. Anani added that there is no alternative to the introduction of a temporary law to stimulate the national economy for the time being until a permanent law is worked out by Parliament.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the relationship between the laws on securities and companies.

The committee's rapporteur, Abed Musa Nahar, said after the meeting that the deputies demanded that the government convene an extraordinary session for Parliament in the coming summer to discuss the draft law on securities.

Noting that no agreement has been reached on this issue, Mr. Nahar said that the two deputy prime ministers will convey the deputies' views to the Council of Ministers.

Experts estimate Arab World requires \$30b for telecom projects until year 2000

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states need private investment in their telecommunication sector to ensure multi-billion-dollar expansion projects, industry experts have said.

They stressed regional states should press ahead with economic reforms to create the right climate for investment and to attract technology.

The experts at an international telecommunication conference in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) estimated the Arab League's 22 members required nearly \$30 billion for telecommunication projects until the year 2000, including around \$13.2 billion for telephone network expansions.

"Arab states should increase private sector participation in the telecommunication sectors," said Louis Hobeika, a former World Bank expert.

"But this depends on many factors," he told the conference. "They include the establishment and enhancement of peace in and among all countries and the availability of stable macro-economic environment."

Ministers and other high-ranking officials and businessmen from 28 countries, including Iran and the United States, have participated in the three-day meeting, covering telecommunication requirements in the Middle East until the year 2000 and means of securing financing for such

projects.

Iran has sent its communications minister while more than 20 U.S. officials, including the assistant secretary of commerce, were present. Washington is pushing to grab more telecommunication contracts in the oil-rich region after winning a multi-billion-dollar telephone deal in Saudi Arabia.

The countries of the Middle East should privatise their telecommunication sector," a UAE communications ministry official said.

"This will ensure funds for the upcoming projects as many of them are suffering from cash problems. It will also attract technology in this sector, provides effective

management and ease the financial burden on the state," he added.

Figures provided by Mr. Hobeika showed Saudi Arabia, which has announced plans to sell part of the telephone and other sectors to the public, needs around \$1.65 billion in the next four years for telephone expansions.

Investments were estimated at \$1.73 billion in Morocco, \$1.55 billion in Egypt, \$1.3 billion in Syria, \$1.23 billion in Algeria, \$1.2 billion in the UAE and \$1.16 billion in Tunisia.

The investments do not cover satellite ventures as the UAE alone intends to spend between \$700 million and \$1 billion to launch its own satel-

lite, making it the first Arab country to have such a facility.

Mr. Hobeika, a well-known Arab economic expert, urged region states to develop their stock markets and liberalise their economies to lure such investments.

"There is a need for the development of efficient, transparent and complete capital markets. It means the Middle East countries should develop their equity, bond, and derivatives markets as

well as give financial institutions the freedom to work in a competitive environment," he said.

"They should also create a transparent and robust investment environment. Governments must create a favourable climate and opportunities for internal and external investments and maintain realistic exchange rates. This will help develop private sector activities," Mr. Hobeika concluded.

Speakers shed light on trade, farm issues concerning WTO

By Mohammad Huneiti
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — On the second and last day of a conference entitled: "The Reality of Trade: International Conference on World Trade Organisation (WTO) - Accession" government participant Rami Maaiia submitted a working paper dealing with facilities versus obstacles in the world of trade.

The paper tackled the question of "country of origin" and its relationship to provisions on textile and woven materials in the WTO accord as well as problems caused by customs tariffs.

Mr. Maaiia, representing the Jordan Exports Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCO), said any country can place obstacles in the application of the WTO rules by imposing such tariffs. He explained that lack of coordination in the application of rules concerning "country of origin" and "customs tariffs" is bound to create an obstacle adversely affecting trade transactions, investments and profits and, as such, restrict the transfer of industrial technology.

Mr. Maaiia expressed the view that Jordan should join the international effort that seeks a special transparent agreement on the question of "country of origin," that would facilitate trade among the WTO member nations.

He also urged Jordan to acquire modern technology so as to produce high quality textiles and so ensure its competitiveness in a world free market.

Another participant, Walid Abed Rabbo, examined the impact of joining the WTO on the agricultural sector in Jordan and described the WTO membership would offer the Kingdom a good chance to improve the quality of its agricultural output by benefiting from foreign expertise that will be offered.

"Jordan should pursue efforts in agrarian reform in order to strengthen its position during the negotiations for joining the WTO," he indicated. "The reform can be achieved through appropriate utilisation of water resources, the employment of skilled labour in farming and by employing modern technology," explained Dr. Abed Rabbo who is director of Administrative Development Department at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Parallel to these efforts, he said, Jordan has to give greater attention to controlling agricultural pests and diseases, better manage its water resources and increase its research in agriculture-related fields.

However, Dr. Abed Rabbo noted that despite measures to increase food output, Jordan's agricultural import bill was likely to increase with the growth in population.

He said that in 1991, Jordan's imports of food products reached JD417 million, dropping slightly in 1994 but rising to JD419 million in 1995 and then suddenly rising to JD677 million in the first 11 months of 1996. The last figure accounted for 24 per cent of the country's total exports.

The conference was organised by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in conjunction with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to deal with the impact of the WTO on the region as well as the challenges facing developing countries wishing to join the organisation.

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Dead Sea holding firm sets up new company to produce magnesium

** THE JORDAN Magensia Company is a new company that was established this week with a preliminary capital of JD30 million, Naser Al Saadoun, the deputy general manager of the Arab Potash Company (APC) has announced.

Affiliated to the holding firm Dead Sea Mineral Industries Company, the total investment in the Jordan Magensia Company (JMC) may reach \$90 million in the future, Mr. Al Saadoun said. He revealed that the holding firm had a 51 per cent equity in JMC with the remaining 49 per cent held by APC (20 per cent), the Social Security Corporation (15 per cent), the Jordan Investment Corporation (five per cent), Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal (6.2 per cent), the Arab Bank Ltd. (1.6 per cent) and the Industrial Development Bank (0.8 per cent).

Mr. Al Saadoun told Al Ra'i that JMC is expected to start production in 1999. The capacity will be about 50,100 tonnes annually of magnesium oxide in addition to 10,000 tonnes annually of magnesium derivatives and magnesium hydroxide, he said. According to the deputy general manager, the new company will provide 250 job opportunities and the return expected from the investment in the project will reach about 18 per cent annually.

Noting that the project was presented at the Amman and Cairo economic summits, the senior APC chief said regional and international financial sources were ready to pump between 50 and 60 per cent of the capital in credits at very favourable interest and other terms.

Mr. Al Saadoun said magnesium oxide is essential in manufacturing fire bricks used in kilns for melting steel. He pointed out that studies have certified the feasibility of obtaining a high quality product that can compete on international markets (Al Ra'i).

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ENWIC
TAWLZ
LARFOL
MIRNIF

Print answer here: A

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: SWISH WEARY FROLIC MANIAC
Answer: A Frisbee contest can turn into this - A WHIRL WAR

| JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|--------|--|
| HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - BUREAU | | | | | | | | | | | |
| TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607178 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 29/04/1997 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH | PAST 12 MONTHS LOW | COMPANY'S NAME | P / S | DIV. | NO. OF TRANS. | NO. OF SHARES | VALUE TRADED JD | OPEN PRICE | CLOSE PRICE | CHANGE | |
| 269.000 | 213.000 | ARAB BANK | 11.5 | 1.59 | 3 | 80 | 20080 | 251.00 | 251.00 | - | |
| 2.100 | 1.740 | JOR. NATIONAL BK. | 2 | 0.00 | 23 | 12192 | 21112 | 1.74 | 1.73 | -0.01 | |
| 3.900 | 3.100 | CALID AMMAN BANK | 9.3 | 1.31 | 6 | 3250 | 14514 | 4.90 | 4.50 | - | |
| 3.600 | 2.760 | BANK OF JORDAN | 10.5 | 0.00 | 1 | 350 | 1015 | 2.90 | 2.90 | - | |
| 9.100 | 4.250 | THE HOUSING BK. | 12.9 | 2.66 | 4 | 5650 | 27470 | 4.86 | 4.83 | -0.03 | |
| 2.950 | 2.440 | JOR. KUWAIT BANK | 19.1 | 0.00 | 1 | 100 | 263 | 2.65 | 2.63 | -0.02 | |
| 1.090 | .800 | JOR. GULF BANK | 4.8 | 8.44 | 1 | 1000 | 810 | .80 | .81 | +0.01 | |
| 4.110 | 3.480 | JOR. ISLAMIC BANK | 17.4 | 0.00 | 7 | 3800 | 13756 | 3.80 | 3.62 | -0.18 | |
| 3.800 | 3.000 | JOR. INV. FID. BANK | 17.6 | 0.00 | 1 | 200 | 650 | 3.15 | 3.25 | +0.10 | |
| 3.850 | 1.040 | BEIT AL-MAL (BETHNA) | .7 | 14.02 | 5 | 1450 | 1561 | 1.13 | 1.07 | -0.06 | |
| 1.440 | 1.000 | PELLELAD. INV. BK. | 9 | 0.00 | 12 | 3947 | 4525 | 1.13 | 1.14 | +0.01 | |
| BANK SECTOR TOTALS | | | | | | | | | | | |
| INDEX: 190.32 | | | CHNG: -0.19 | | 64 | 32019 | 105856 | | | | |
| 1.820 | 1.450 | JOR. ELECTRIC PWR. | 11.7 | 7.10 | 50 | 79967 | 135492 | 1.69 | 1.69 | - | |
| 1.560 | 1.280 | IRBID ELECTRICITY | 8.2 | 8.33 | 1 | 50 | 69 | 1.38 | 1.38 | - | |
| 2.800 | 2.090 | SHIPPING LINES | 10.1 | 8.33 | 3 | 10700 | 25680 | 2.40 | 2.40 | - | |
| 1.520 | .930 | RAIL. PORTFOLIO | 9 | 0.00 | 2 | 750 | 728 | .97 | .97 | - | |
| 1.030 | .830 | REAL ESTATE INV. | 12.2 | 6.82 | 1 | 250 | 320 | .89 | .88 | -0.01 | |
| .920 | .480 | JORDAN INTL. TRAD. | 25.2 | 0.00 | 1 | 100 | 49 | .48 | .49 | +0.01 | |
| 2.200 | 1.200 | HID. EAST HOTELS | 17.8 | 0.00 | 3 | 1000 | 1175 | 1.20 | 1.17 | -0.03 | |
| 1.220 | .950 | ZARQA EDUCATION | 8.5 | 6.67 | 3 | 825 | 825 | .97 | .97 | - | |
| 2.230 | 1.650 | UNIFIED CO. | 7.8 | 6.67 | 1 | 250 | 413 | 1.65 | 1.65 | -0.01 | |
| SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS | | | | | | | | | | | |
| INDEX: 103.22 | | | CHNG: -0.16 | | 66 | 93927 | 164799 | | | | |
| 3.800 | 3.060 | JOR. CEMENT FACT. | 20.9 | 2.74 | 16 | 3110 | 11320 | 3.65 | 3.65 | - | |
| 3.500 | 2.710 | JOR. FERTILISER MINES | 32.8 | 0.00 | 2 | 1110 | 3386 | 3.20 | 3.05 | -0.15 | |
| 10.400 | 8.720 | JOR. PETROL. REFINERY | 10.3 | 7.85 | 26 | 3840 | 39073 | 10.19 | 10.19 | - | |
| 7.300 | 6.250 | JORDAN TANNING | 7.2 | 5.37 | 2 | 600 | 4020 | 6.68 | 6.70 | +0.02 | |
| 3.360 | 1.650 | INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX | 24.7 | 0.00 | 4 | 1000 | 1843 | .66 | .64 | -0.02 | |
| 4.100 | 3.040 | ARAB PHARM. MANF. | 10.1 | 5.45 | 7 | 1085 | 3959 | 3.66 | 3.67 | +0.01 | |
| 7.250 | 5.650 | JOR. CERAMIC IND. | 8.8 | 3.52 | 1 | 300 | 2130 | 7.15 | 7.10 | -0.05 | |
| 1.760 | 1.180 | ARAB FOD. & MED. | 9 | 0.00 | 5 | 1500 | 1790 | 1.36 | 1.36 | - | |
| 5.400 | 3.130 | ARAB ALUM. IND. | 8.4 | 8.83 | 5 | 1250 | 4249 | 3.40 | 3.40 | - | |
| .960 | .450 | LIVESTOCK & POULTRY | 11.0 | 0.00 | 38 | 34550 | 17498 | .50 | .52 | +0.02 | |
| 1.040 | 1.040 | ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD. | 10.6 | 6.64 | 3 | 750 | 1200 | 1.04 | 1.04 | - | |
| 1.310 | .850 | NATL. CABLE WIRE. HFAC | 8.3 | 10.71 | 2 | 2200 | 1220 | .55 | .56 | +0.01 | |
| 1.540 | .730 | INTERNED. PETRO. CHEM. | 9 | 0.00 | 6 | 765 | 646 | .73 | .73 | - | |
| 3.720 | 2.130 | NATL. CABLE WIRE. HFAC | 16.3 | 0.00 | 2 | 550 | 1476 | 2.78 | 2.67 | -0.11 | |
| 1.170 | .570 | JOR. SULPHUR CHEM. | 9 | 0.00 | 21 | 9350 | 6311 | .66 | .68 | +0.02 | |
| 1.670 | 1.120 | ARAB PHARM. CHEM. | 26.8 | 0.00 | 16 | 9500 | 9801 | 1.42 | 1.43 | +0.01 | |
| 2.660 | 1.420 | UNIV. HOUS. INDUS. | 4.3 | 14.08 | 6 | 1500 | 2120 | 1.46 | 1.42 | -0.04 | |
| 1.780 | 1.140 | JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES | 15.5 | 8.70 | 14 | 5300 | 6100 | 1.46 | 1.45 | -0.01 | |
| 1.230 | .840 | JOR. NEW CABLE CO. | 15.9 | 0.00 | 8 | 1800 | 1566 | .87 | .87 | - | |
| 2.360 | 1.750 | HEL. - SANY READY WEAR | 17 | 0.00 | 1 | 1500 | 2645 | 1.77 | 1.79 | +0.02 | |
| 1.360 | 1.020 | INTL. TOBACCO | 27.8 | 0.00 | 11 | 7050 | 8333 | 1.18 | 1.18 | - | |
| 1.440 | .890 | UNION CH. & VEG. | 38.5 | 0.00 | 6 | 2820 | 2537 | .89 | .90 | +0.01 | |
| INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS | | | | | | | | | | | |
| INDEX: 119.70 | | | CHNG: -0.66 | | 193 | 88781 | 132769 | | | | |
| GRAND TOTAL | | | | | | | | | | | |
| INDEX: 150.46 | | | CHNG: -0.37 | | 323 | 214737 | 403304 | | | | |
| PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 29/04/1997 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| .670 | .370 | CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE | 9 | 0.00 | 1 | 1100 | 451 | .41 | .41 | - | |
| .790 | .440 | JOR. TRADE FAC. | 12.0 | 0.00 | 3 | 5350 | 2408 | .45 | .45 | - | |
| .840 | .570 | UNION INV. 501 | 65.1 | 0.00 | 9 | 18020 | 3243 | .69 | .68 | -0.01 | |
| .840 | .370 | ARAB FID. INVEST. | 9 | 0.00 | 13 | 114550 | 52800 | .46 | .46 | - | |
| .950 | .740 | AL-SABAH INV. 751 | 8 | 0.00 | 10 | 12368 | 6095 | .78 | .74 | -0.04 | |
| .640 | .200 | JOR. INDUS. HATCHERY | 9 | 0.00 | 1 | 250 | 63 | .36 | .35 | -0.01 | |
| .740 | .510 | ARAB FOD. & MED. | 9 | 0.00 | 14 | 8827 | 5071 | .57 | .58 | +0.01 | |
| .690 | .430 | ARAB INTL. INV. TRD. | 9 | 0.00 | 7 | 5450 | 2438 | .44 | .45 | +0.01 | |
| .730 | .490 | NATL. TEXTILE | 9 | 0.00 | 2 | 2750 | 1425 | .50 | .50 | - | |
| .840 | .490 | NATL. MILIT. ENG. NAMICO | 8 | 0.00 | 5 | 10289 | 8463 | .86 | .86 | - | |
| .880 | .720 | UNION TOBACCO 751 | 8 | 0.00 | 10 | 5850 | 4212 | .72 | .72 | - | |
| .660 | .430 | ARAB ELECT. INDUS. | 8 | 0.00 | 3 | 3750 | 1913 | .51 | .51 | - | |
| .730 | .600 | HIDEAST PHARM. 751 | 8 | 0.00 | 12 | 14403 | 5074 | .62 | .60 | -0.02 | |
| 1.310 | .860 | UNION TOBACCO 751 | 8 | 0.00 | 3 | 3250 | 1993 | .86 | .87 | +0.01 | |
| .770 | .590 | RABE PHARM. 651 | 8 | 0.00 | 9 | 47000 | 11750 | .60 | .60 | - | |
| .960 | .760 | INDUS. CERAMIC | 25.9 | 0.00 | 3 | 950 | 399 | .42 | .42 | - | |
| .590 | .360 | 1. TEXTILE MANUF. | 8 | 0.00 | 1 | 1000 | 390 | .41 | .39 | -0.02 | |
| .760 | .560 | PEARL SAN. P. CONV. | 8 | 0.00 | 3 | 850 | 476 | .56 | .56 | - | |
| .820 | .590 | NATL. POULTRY | 8 | 0.00 | 7 | 4600 | 3353 | .69 | .70 | +0.01 | |
| .870 | .530 | NATL. EAST COMPLEX | 8.2 | 0.00 | 1 | 200 | 140 | .74 | .70 | -0.04 | |
| GRAND TOTAL | | | | | | | | | | | |
| INDEX: 119.70 | | | CHNG: -0.66 | | 193 | 88781 | 132769 | | | | |
| GRAND TOTAL | | | | | | | | | | | |
| INDEX: 150.46 | | | CHNG: -0.37 | | 323 | 214737 | 403304 | | | | |

Lipton Championships

Bruguera shocks Sampras, Muster ousts Courier

KEY BISCAINE, Florida (R) — An intensely determined Sergi Bruguera of Spain rallied from a one-set deficit to shock world No. 1 Pete Sampras 5-7, 7-6 (7-2), 6-4 on Friday in the semi-finals of the Lipton Championships.

"I'm very proud of this victory, very, very proud," Bruguera beamed. "I think it's more difficult to beat Pete playing on his surface and his country."

In a brutal two-hour, eight-minute hardcourt match, the 35th-ranked Bruguera battled valiantly in hot, humid conditions to beat the American No. 1 seed.

Bruguera refused to be daunted even when Sampras was playing well and a number of crucial lines calls seemed to unfairly go against him.

"I played unbelievably," Bruguera said. "During the match I kept thinking fight, play the best tennis and I think I did it."

In an evening semi-final match, Thomas Muster of Austria easily defeated Jim Courier 6-3, 6-4.

Eight years ago, after defeating Yannick Noah to reach the Lipton final — the last final he's reached on American soil — Muster was struck by a drunk driver and suffered severed ligaments in his left knee.

Many people feared that Muster's career was over, but the Austrian was back on tour less than six months later.

The second-ranked Muster holds a convincing 11-3 career lead over Bruguera.

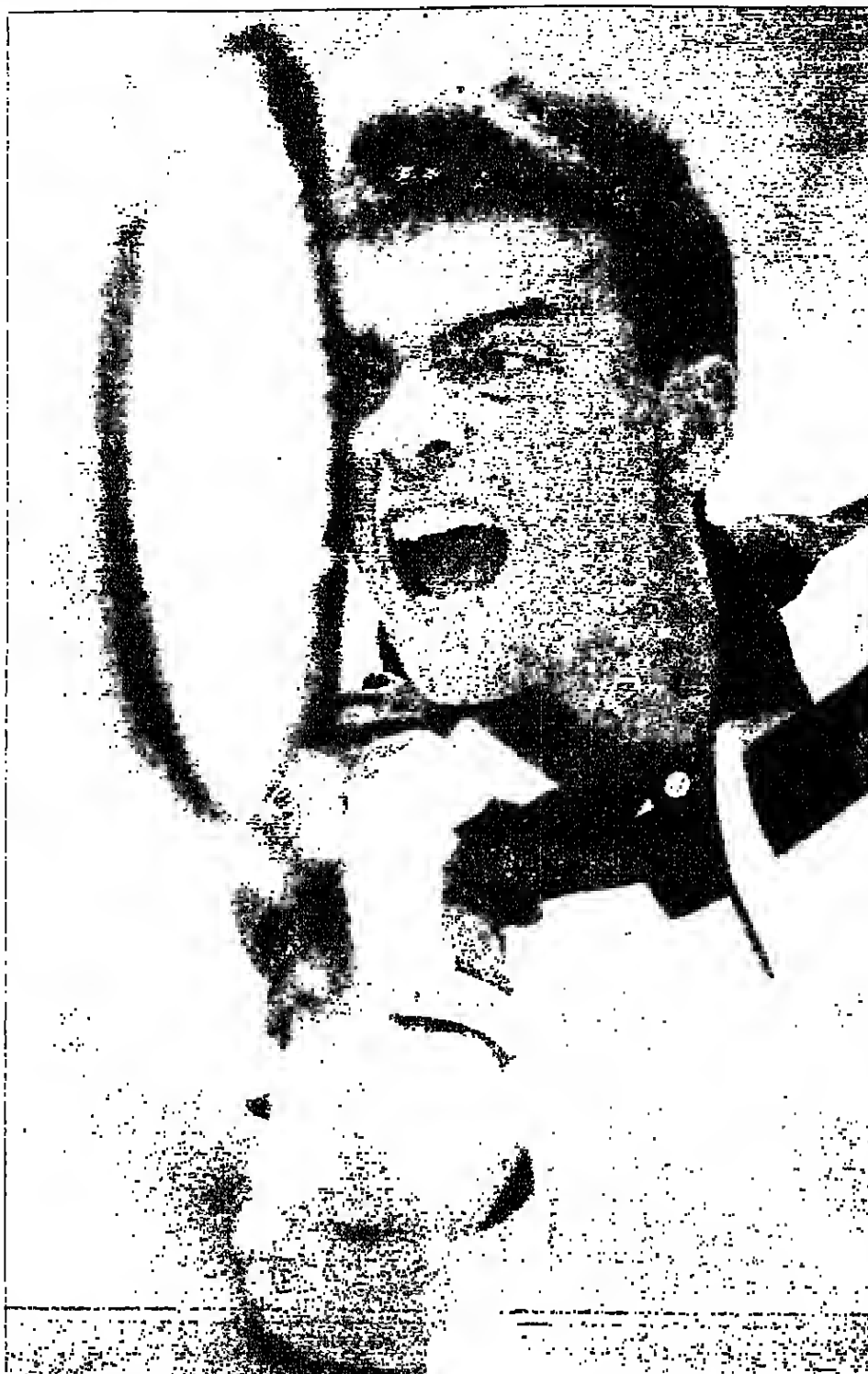
Sunday, Bruguera will attempt to become the first Spaniard to win the Lipton title in the 13-year history of the tournament.

Coming into the match, Bruguera and Sampras were 2-2 in career meetings. He handed Sampras his second loss of the year in 22 matches.

"It's a match I should win. I really believe that," said Sampras, who also lost in the semi-finals here last year. "Sergi is a good player, but on hardcourt, it's a match I should win nine times out of 10."

Sampras won the first three tournaments he played in 1997 — the Australian Open, San Jose and Philadelphia.

"Mentally, I just didn't have it today," Sampras said. "I'm pretty tough on



Sergi Bruguera of Spain returns a volley at the net from Pete Sampras of the United States March 28 in their semi-final match at the Lipton Championships. Bruguera upset the top-ranked Sampras 5-7, 7-6, (7-2), 6-4 (Reuters photo)

myself, feel like I should make every point. I just played a bad match, even though I played well. I had chances to beat him."

If Bruguera wins Sunday, it will mark the first time in his career that he has won a tournament before April, and his first outside Europe. All 14 of his career titles came in the last nine months of the year.

Bruguera, a two-time French Open champion in 1993 and 1994, is known for his ability to navigate clay courts. Once ranked No. 3 in the world,

Bruguera has struggled with a serious knee injury, and more recently, torn ligaments in his right ankle in December 1995.

He ended 1996 the 81st-ranked player, but his road to the Lipton final will move him back into the top 25.

This marks Bruguera's second final of 1997, having lost to Goran Ivanisevic on carpet at Milan earlier this month.

Sampras offered Bruguera four break points in the

match and the Spaniard accepted the challenge all four times — in the fourth game of the first set, the second game of the second set, and the third and seventh games of the third set.

At 1-1 in the second set tie-breaker, Bruguera won six of the last seven points.

With Bruguera ahead 3-1 in the final set, Sampras broke even in the sixth game with an unreturnable drop volley, but the Spaniard immediately broke serve again in the seventh game at 30-40 with an exquisite backhand pass.



Pete Sampras

Davis Cup

Jordan loses 2-1 to Brunei

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

JORDAN LOST 2-1 to Brunei in the Davis Cup Asia/Oceania Zone Group 4 tie currently underway in the Omani capital, Muscat. Faris Azzouni won the first singles match 2-0, while teammate Tharwat Al Qaisi lost 2-0. Jordan also lost the doubles match 2-0 as Brunei completed a 2-1 win.

Rain has disrupting the schedule of the six-team group twice since the tie began Wednesday.

Jordan lost 2-1 to Tajikistan after rain delayed their opening tie. Faris Azzouni won the first singles match 6-2, 6-2 however Ahmad Hadid lost 6-0, 6-1. Jordan's Azzouni and Ghassan Al Qadi lost the doubles 6-0, 6-1.

In the second tie, Jordan led Oman 1-0 after Faris Azzouni won the singles match 6-0, 7-5. Ahmad Al Hadid was trailing 0-3 in the first set of the second singles match when the game was halted because of rain.

It is yet unclear when the second singles and the doubles against Oman are to be completed and no results were announced by press time.

Jordan's next matches are against the UAE and Syria.

The March 26-30 qualifiers group Syria, Tajikistan, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Brunei and Jordan with only the top two teams of the six-team group promoted to Group 3.

Prior to their departure the Kingdom's team had expressed hope that they would be able to score better results and be promoted to Group 3.

Jordan had been relegated to Group 4 in 1995 and failed to be promoted last year after playing in groups 2 and 3 previously.

Representing Jordan are Tharwat Qaisi, Ahmad Hadid and Ghassan Qadi and Faris Azzouni. The team has been training under the supervision of head coach Kathem Hussein, formerly Iraq's top ranked player.

Countries participating in the annual team tournament are classified into five groups with the world's top teams playing in the prestigious World Group. The other countries are divided into four regional groups.

The Davis Cup competition is played on a round-robin format with two singles and one doubles match for each team daily.

Women's tennis forecast calls for extended Hingis reign

KEY BISCAINE, Florida (AFP) — Sixteen-year-old Swiss sensation Martina Hingis moves past Steffi Graf on Monday to become the youngest world No. 1 in tennis history. And no one is likely to dethrone her soon.

"It feels great to be No. 1, especially at my age. It's what I was working for all my life," Hingis said. "I have so much motivation. I have never enjoyed playing tennis as much as I do right now."

Hingis has dominated the WTA tour for the past six months while Graf has been sidelined by a knee injury. The German star is not expected to return to the WTA tour for another month.

"Martina is, in my opinion, going to stay No. 1 for a while," former No. 1 Monica Seles said. "I can't say for sure. But she is quite safe through the (U.S.) Open because Steffi has to defend a lot of points."

Graf last year won Wimbledon plus the U.S., French and German opens and the WTA championships and must repeat to sustain points.

Not defending titles here at the Lipton Championship and at Indian Wells cost her the top spot.

Australian Open winner Hingis reached only the French third round, Wimbledon fourth round and U.S. Open semi-finals last year. Any improvements in 1997 will increase her lead.

"Martina doesn't have great results so she is going to gain a lot of points," Seles said. "She is playing more tournaments than Steffi. I'm not sure how open No. 1 will be until pretty much the end of the year."

Third-ranked Jana Novotna and fifth-ranked Seles said they are more concerned about winning Grand Slam titles than being No. 1. But Czech veteran Novotna had a warning for Hingis.

"The way to the top is always easier than staying there," she said. "The rest of us will try to stop her. There are a lot of other players."

"We will see how well Martina can cope with being at the top and performing on a daily basis as the No. 1 player in the world."

It's yet to be seen if she can do that or not," Hingis does not act worried.



Steffi Graf

"I'm shaking already," she said with a child's teasing smile and giggles. "No, it doesn't make any difference. You just become No. 1. Everybody wants to beat me now. It's what I wanted to do when I wasn't on top. It doesn't make a difference to me."

Hingis won her first 28 matches this year, claiming her first Grand Slam title in Melbourne plus winning in Sydney, Tokyo and Paris and reaching the final here Sunday against Seles in her return after a four-month layoff.

"Martina has really improved so much the past six or seven months," Seles said. "A year ago she lost here in her first round. A lot of players have the talent.

But Martina is there and the other ones have to get there."

Most expect Graf, Hingis and Seles to battle for No. 1 if they can all stay healthy long enough.

"If Steffi is healthy, it will be a great challenge for her toward the end of her career to try to overtake Martina," Novotna said. "I would like to give Martina and Steffi a hard time."

Graf beat Hingis in their most recent meeting, a five-set thriller at the WTA championship final last November. Rivals see little difference in them.

"Maybe with Steffi you see her backhand is a little weaker," Seles said. "Martina is all-around really good. She plays the key

points great."

"It's a difficult question," 10th-ranked American Mary Joe Fernandez said. "Martina has the legs to run down Steffi's big forehands. She is able to come in and put Steffi on defense. Steffi has the big serve. You can maybe out-hit her for a while on her forehand side. I can't say one is better than the other."

But the thought of adding a healthy Seles into the mix excites Fernandez.

"If Monica is on, it's tough," Fernandez said. "She opens the court with her angles. She has the strength and power to play well. If Martina plays well, it's a tough battle. Monica for sure is capable of beating her."

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL:634144

PHILADELPHIA "1"

Kevin Bacon, Robert Deniro, Dustin Hoffman, Jason Patrick & Brad Pitt... in

SLEEPERS

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:634144

PHILADELPHIA "2"

Ethan Hawke & Julie Delpy.... in

BEFORE SUNRISE

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699238

PLAZA

Adel Imam, Shireen & Saeed Saleh Bakhit Wa Adilah (2) Al Jardal Walkankah

Shows: 12:00, 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420

CONCORD

CONCORD "1"

MADONNA & ANTONIO BANDERAS...IN EVITA

(new print)

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:30

Nabil & Hisham's Theatre. TEL: 625155

Aman.. Ya Ho

The theatre is closed every Saturday & Sunday For reservations call 625155

Al Jazireh return home today after taking part in Arab Clubs Championship

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AL JAZIREH return home Sunday after representing Jordan in the 11th Arab Clubs Basketball Championship in Nabl, Tunisia.

The Kingdom's third-ranked team lost 65-57 to Kuwait's Al Jahra' in the last match deciding 13-16 places.

Al Jazireh's only win was an 82-64 (35-30) victory over Libya's Al Nasr.

They lost 83-69 to Tunisia's Al Itihad, and 75-63 to Libya's Al Muroj in the round deciding 9-12th places.

Al Jazireh had dropped out of the race for 1-8th places after losing 67-65 (31-27) to Lebanon's Al Hikmah, 79-71 to Algeria's Bofariq and 92-60 to Tunisian champions Al Zahra' in the first round.

Up until their last match Al Jazireh's Husam Lutfi stayed atop the competition's top scorers list after leading the players with 97 points in the first round.

Egypt's Al Zamalek and Tunisia's Al Mala'h advanced to the final match while Tunisia's Al Zahra were to meet Saudi Arabia's Al Itihad in the match deciding 3rd and 4th places.

While Al Jazireh's results are undoubtedly unsatisfactory for officials and fans, the team's participation is considered beneficial as their players are mostly from the under-22 age-group making their inaugural Arab Clubs Championship against teams with professional lineups.

Sixteen clubs representing nine Arab countries took part in the men's competition. The top two in each of the four groups moved to the quarterfinals to play for 1-8th places.

In addition to Al Jazireh, teams dropping out of the top eight were Kuwait's Al Jahra', Algeria's Bina', Lebanon's Al Hikmah in addition to Libya's Al Nasr and

Al Muroj.

The top eight included Al Mal'ab (Tunisia), Al Riyadi (Lebanon), Al Zahra' (Tunisia), Bofariq (Algeria), Zamalek (Egypt), Al Itihad (Saudi Arabia), Al Wadi (Tunisia), Al Itihad (Egypt), Ohud (Saudi Arabia).

Only six teams took part in the 7th Women's Championship. They included hosts Al Hilal, Al Safa' and Al Mal'ab of Tunisia, Egypt's Al Ahli, Hussein Dai of Algeria, and Lebanon's Homenemen.

The championship organisers allocated prizes for top scorer, best player, ideal team in addition to best three-point scorer.

In previous Arab Championships, Jordan's former First Division champions Al Ahli and reigning champs Al Orthodoxi represented Jordan but declined to participate this year citing preparations for the country's first Division Championship.

Titleholders Al Orthodoxi, the country's undisputed basketball powerhouse from 1976-1989, won back the title in the past two seasons and repeating that is a top priority.

On the other hand, Al Ahli are hoping to regain their title which they won in 90, 92, 93 and 94 and have recruited a new coach who was in charge of the Russian team at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

Third-ranked Al Jazireh who have become serious contenders for the Kingdom's First Division Championship during the past two years, hope that the Arab Championship will have provided the team the chance to prepare for the First Division Championship which they will try to win for the first time in their history.

Last season, they beat Al Ahli and had a sure shot at second if not first place but later faltered in the final round.

Nine countries vie for title as Arab Table Tennis Cup begins

Qatar, S. Arabia, Lebanon impressive on opening day

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Top players lived up to expectations of reaching the semi-finals of the 6th Arab Table Tennis Cup Championship which started Saturday at Al Hussein Youth City.

Qatar's 1995 Arab Federation Cup champion Hamad Al Hamadi, Saudi Arabia's Nabil Al Maqawi and Shibr Al Awami, Tunisia's Mukhtar Bo Azizi, Lebanon's Mohammad Al Habash and Jordan's Abdul Aziz Rida showed they were the favourites to reach the semi-finals after scoring convincing wins in their first day matches.

In the women's singles, Lebanon's Larissa Shoaib, Jocelyn Track, and Tunisia's Nadia Lusif won with flying colours.

Jordan's Alia Tufaha lost to Lebanon's Larissa Shoaib after a breath-taking match in which Tufaha gave Shoaib a hard time before losing 23-21 in the third set.

Minister of Culture and Youth Qassem Abu Ein inaugurated the championship welcoming participants of nine countries.

Vice President of the Arab Table Tennis Federation (ATTF) and President of the Lebanese Table Tennis Federation George Hani underlined the importance of such events adding that he hoped they would be held on a uninterrupted basis.

The championship misses the Egyptian team — considered one of the Arab World's best and known for their advanced form and tactics.

Their absence is sure to boost the chances of other teams in reaching the semi-finals. The women's competition will miss Arab Cup titleholder Sonia Tweini of Tunisia.

The 16 participants in the men's singles were divided into two groups:

First Group consists of Qatar Hamad Al Hamadi, Saudi Arabia's Shibr Al Awami, Lebanon Mohammad Al Habash, Jordan's Iyad Maknay, Tunisia's Al Bashier Ben Abdullah, Morocco's Mustafa Rimal, Palestine's Radi Al Shareef and Syria's Amer Barakat.

Group Two: Saudi Arabia's Nabeel Maqawi, Qatar's Aref Abdul Rahman, Jordan's Abdul Aziz Rida, Sudan's Osama Al Mak, Tunis' Mukhtar Bo Azizi, Jordan's Mustapha Rida, Morocco's Issam Al Bitawi and Palestine's Raed Al Sharif.

The 10 participants in the women's singles also were divided into two groups with only ten participants taking part.

Group One: Tunisia's Nadia Lusif, Lebanon Jocelyn Track, Jordan's Hadeel Awad and Hanadi Tufaha and Syria's Hadia Abu Sham.

Group Two: Tunisia's Afaf Nowar, Lebanon's Larissa Shoaib, Jordan's Alia Tufaha, Syria's Suha Anous and Palestine's Riham Al Halaq.

Results of matches:

- Abdul Aziz Rida (Jordan) — Osama Mak (Sudan) 2-0.
- Nabil Al Maqawi (Saudi Arabia) — Raed Al Sharif (Palestine) 21-19/21-1
- Shibr Al Awami (Saudi Arabia) — Radi Al Sharif (Palestine) 21-19/21-12
- Mohammad Al Habash (Lebanon) — Mustapha Rimal (Morocco) 21-12/21-17
- Abed Aziz Rida (Jordan) — Mustapha Rida (Jordan) 21-13/16-21/21-13
- Basheer Ben Abdullah (Tunisia) — Iyad Maknay (Jordan) 21-17/16-21/21-19
- Aref Abed Rahman (Qatar) — Issam Bitawi (Morocco) 21-19/21-15
- Mukhtar Bo Azizi (Tunisia) — Osama Al Mak (Sudan) 21-15/21-14
- Hamad Al Hamadi (Qatar) — Radi Sharif (Palestine) 21-10/21-14
- Shibr Al Awami (Saudi Arabia) — Basheer Ben Abdullah (Tunisia) 21-18/21-17
- Mohammad Al Habash (Lebanon) — Iyad Maknay (Jordan) 21-14/21-19
- Mukhtar Bo Azizi (Tunisia) — Aref Abed Rahman (Qatar) 21-17/21-14
- Amer Barakat (Syria) — Mustapha Rimal (Morocco) 21-16/21-16
- Nabeel Maqawi (Saudi Arabia) — Issam Bitawi (Morocco) 21-12/21-18
- Mustapha Rida (Jordan) — Raed Shareef (Jordan) 21-10/21-19
- Hamad Hamadi (Qatar) — Radi Shareef (Palestine) 21-10/21-14

Meanwhile in the women's singles:

- Hanadi Tufaha (Jordan) — Hadeel Awad (Jordan) 21-13/12-21/21-15
- Larissa Shoaib (Lebanon) — Riham Halaq (Jordan) 21-5/21-6
- Alia Tufaha (Jordan) — Suha Anousi (Syria) 21-9/21-6
- Larissa Shoaib (Lebanon) — Alia Tufaha (Jordan) 21-17/21-23/23-21
- Nadia Lousif (Tunisia) — Hadia Abu Sham (Syria) 21-18/16-21/21-15
- Jocelyn Track (Lebanon) — Hadeel Awad (Jordan) 21-8/21-8
- Afaf Nowar (Tunisia) — Riham Halaq (Palestine) 21-9/21-14
- Jocelyn Track (Lebanon) — Hadia Abu Sham (Syria) 23-21/21-19



North Carolina starting guard Vince Foster slam dunks during practice at the RCA Dome in Indianapolis. His team will face Arizona in the first round of the Final Four basketball tournament. The North Carolina Tar Heels put on an impromptu slam dunk fest for the fans at the end of the team practice (Reuters photo)

Pacers beat Hornets

CHARLOTTE (R) — Fred Hoiberg called a leaning three-pointer from the top of the key with two seconds left to take the Indiana Pacers to a 116-115 victory over the Charlotte Hornets on Friday. The New Jersey Nets beat the New York Knicks 92-86. The Detroit Pistons posted their most lopsided victory ever over the Los Angeles Clippers, 113-85.

Miami beat hung on for their eighth straight win, 83-79 over the reeling Cleveland Cavaliers.

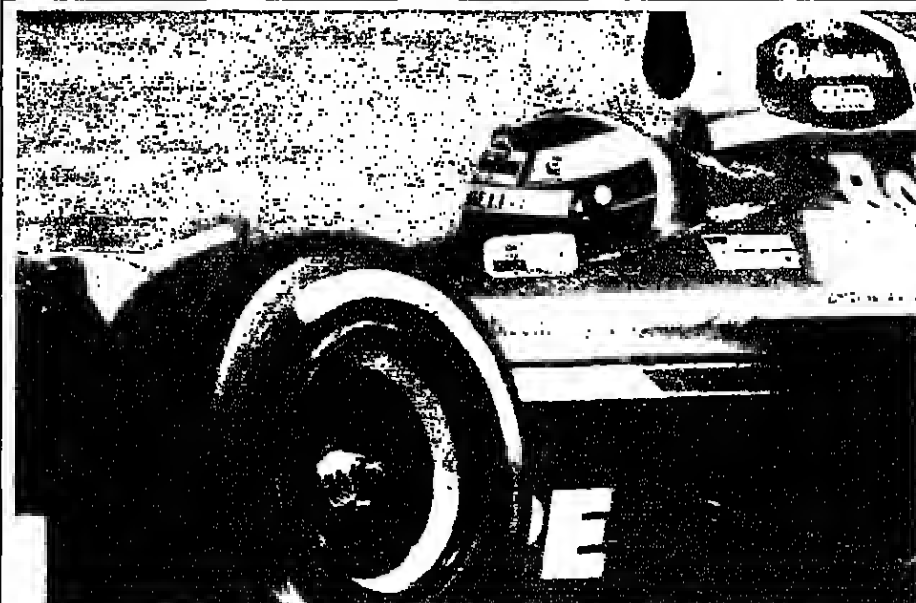
The Philadelphia 76ers milled over the Boston Celtics, 113-105.

The Washington Bullets exploded for a season-high 41 points in the period and coasted to a 113-86 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

In Phoenix, Kevin Johnson poured in a season-high 38 points and Rex Chapman scored the last seven points of overtime as the Phoenix Suns won their fifth straight game, outlasting the Golden State Warriors, 122-105.

The Utah Jazz established a franchise record for wins in March with a 101-96 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Karl Malone scored 31 points and Jeff Hornacek added 25 for the Jazz.



German Formula One driver Heinz-Harald Frentzen drives his Williams Renault during the first session of free practice at the Interlagos race track. Frentzen clocked 1:17.506 after completing 29 laps (Reuters photo)

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THE VANISHING TRUMP TRICK

Both vulnerable. West deals.

NORTH
AS
Q83
QJ942
AK872
WEST
AK3
QJ9762
QK3
J848
EAST
AQ9742
QJ1064
QJ5
SOUTH
AA10663
Q9
Q10978
Q5

The bidding:

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

Pass Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠

It might seem that, when the

defenders hold the ace and king of

trumps between them, each ade-

quately guarded, two tricks are

their due. But that is not necessa-

by the case, as this hand illustrates.

North's jump to two no trump

was unusual, in this case showing

the two minor suits. With length in

one, the queen in the other and two

aces, South was full value for the

jump to five diamonds.

West led the king of hearts and,

with clubs breaking 4-2, it seemed

that declarer would have to lose two

trumps and a heart. But bridge is a

strange game. Declarer won the

heart lead in hand and played off

three top clubs. To prevent declarer

from discarding a heart on the third

club, East was forced to ruff.

Trumping high would not help, so

East ruffed with the five and

declarer overruffed.

The ace of spades was cashed,

dummy was entered with a spade

ruff and a club ruff in the closed

hand established a long club on the

table. Another spade ruff provided

the entry to lead the good club.

(West could not squander the king

of trumps by trumping in front of

dummy — the losing heart would

be pitched.) Again, on the next club

East could not afford to ruff with

the master diamond, so a heart was

discarded. Declarer did the same,

and West scored a ruff with the

three of trumps.

Declarer ruffed the forced heart

return and led a trump, and great

was the fall thereof. South lost only

a club ruff and the ace of trumps!

M.S.C.

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Bahrain jails 21 'plotters'

MANAMA (Agencies) — Bahrain's state security court on Saturday completed the sentencing of 21 people accused of involvement in a pro-Iranian plot to topple the government. The court, whose rulings cannot be appealed, set prison terms ranging from three to fifteen years.

Among those found guilty are Ali Al Mutqawi, who received 15 years of imprisonment and a fine of 7,000 dinars (\$18,568) and Sheikh Jassim Al Kayat, who was sentenced to 12 years and was fined 5,000 dinars.

The trial of 81 suspects — 22 of them in absentia — began on March 1. They were accused of joining the military wing of the allegedly Iranian backed Bahraini Hizbollah (Party of God), creating an organisation aimed at toppling the government, possessing weapons without permission and contacting a foreign country.

Lawyers and families of the accused attended the trial at the Coast Guard station in Muharraq, linked with the capital Manama by a three kilometre causeway. Lawyers had said the suspects could have faced the death penalty.

It was not clear what verdicts were delivered against those tried in absentia but a government statement sent to Reuters said 12 suspects were acquitted.

Three suspects accused of an arson attack last year, in which seven Bangladeshi restaurant workers were killed, were condemned to death by the court, but the sentences have not yet been carried out.

Bahrain last June accused Iran of an attempt to topple the island's government by force; a charge denied by Tehran.

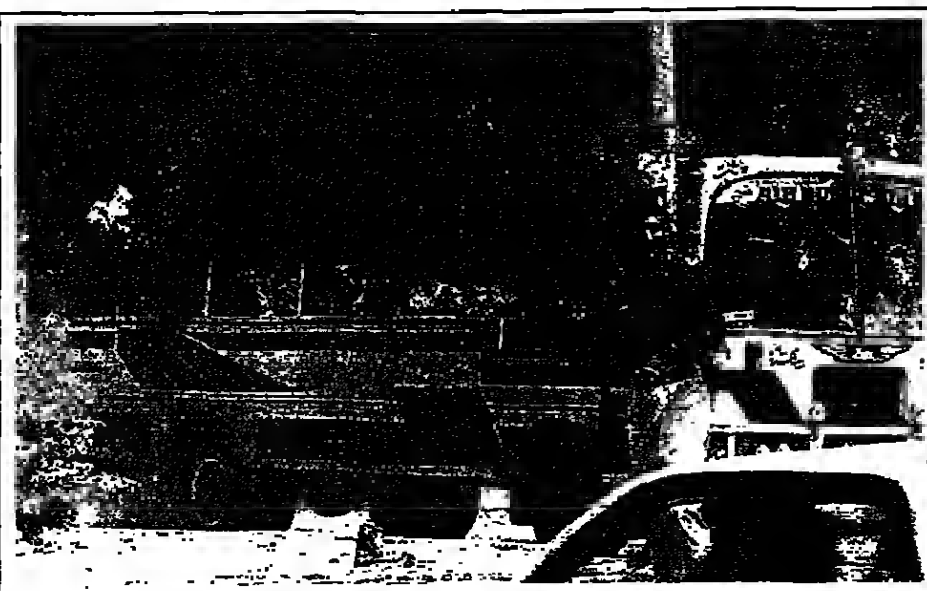
The court, set up by the government in March last year to speed up rulings, passed the first series of verdicts on Wednesday which coincided with the first anniversary of the execution by firing squad of Isa Qambar for killing a policeman.

Members of Bahrain's majority Shi'ite Muslim community have waged sporadic protests, bombings, arson attacks and violence since December 1994 to demand political and economic reforms from the largely Sunni government.

At least 28 people have been killed due to the unrest in the country and the court has so far jailed about 220 people in connection with anti-government violence and protests.

Amnesty International appealed to the government earlier this month to scrap the trial of the alleged coup plotters, claiming it was "unfair" but Manama dismissed the rights group's concerns.

Bahrain remains the Gulf's main financial and banking centre.



VIOLENCE IN KARACHI: A police officer stands guard on Saturday near a burning bus set ablaze by students in a protest in Karachi, Pakistan triggered by the death of a girl student who slipped from the footboard of an overcrowded bus and crushed by the rear wheels (AFP photo)

Israel has shut Arab states out of peace process: Arab League

CAIRO (Agencies) — The Arab League on Saturday accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of forcing Arab countries out of the region's peace process with his hardline policies.

"The provocative policies of Netanyahu have closed all the avenues available to the Arab countries to advance the peace process," said Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid.

"These Israeli policies give no opportunity to Arab countries to deal with Israel with any confidence," added Mr. Abdul Meguid, in particular referring to Israeli construction of a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

He added that Mr. Netanyahu's policies would top the agenda of the Arab League foreign ministers' meeting to be held in Cairo on Sunday and Monday.

Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf Ben Alawi Abdullah on Saturday called on Arab countries to reassess their ties with Israel as he left Muscat to take part in the League meeting in Cairo.

"In the situation where Israel has not respected its commitments with regard to the peace process, it is only natural that the Arab countries reconsider their relations with the Jewish state," he told the official Omani news agency.

On Wednesday the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — called on all Arab countries to reconsider their ties with Israel. Islamic countries on Saturday urged Arab and Muslim states to reconsider relations with Israel and called on the Israelis to halt the settlement project in Arab East Jerusalem.

OIC issues statement

Morocco's official news agency MAP reported that the Jerusalem Committee headed by King Hassan of Morocco,

which ended a meeting in Rabat on Thursday night, had said in a final statement:

"The committee exhorts Islamic states which took steps towards establishing relations with Tel Aviv in the framework of the peace process, to revise their ties with Israel including the closure of missions and offices."

The committee was set up in 1976 on the recommendation of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference to try to prevent Israel from making demographic changes to Jerusalem.

The committee said its recommendation would stay in effect until Israel respected United Nations resolutions related to the peace process and commitments made at Oslo and Madrid.

It called on Israel "to immediately halt its settlement activities in Jerusalem and notably in Jabal Abu Ghneim."

The meeting asked King Hassan to send messages to Islamic heads of state asking them to make more effort to apply the terms of the final statement.

King Hassan asked the closing session to set up a fund to enable Muslims around the world to support their Palestinian brothers, the statement said. It gave no details of the fund's initial capital. A Palestinian diplomat said the fund was expected to be set up by mid-April.

It was not known why the committee delayed by 48 hours issuing its statement. But diplomats noted that the meeting coincided with talks in Morocco involving U.S. peace envoy Dennis Ross, King Hassan and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Since its creation, the committee has held 16 sessions, 15 of them in Morocco under the chairmanship of King Hassan.

Members are Bangladesh, Egypt, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Syria

and the Palestinian National Authority.

Israel accused the committee of harming the peace process with its call for Muslim states to re-assess their ties with the Jewish state.

"This decision damages the peace process in the region," Eytan Ben Zur, the director general of the Israeli foreign ministry, told state radio.

Mubarak warns Israel

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak warned Saturday of an explosion of violence which could touch both his country and Israel unless the Jewish state works to lower tension in the peace process.

"I am afraid of violence not only against Israel but against the states that signed peace with Israel. There are so many things which terrorist groups could act against," Mr. Mubarak said in an interview with Israeli television.

"The instability in the region's peace process will lead to violence. What is happening now is shocking. And you are responsible," he said, referring to Israel.

The Egyptian president also said he was sceptical of an Israeli proposal to skip over the interim phase of the peace process with the Palestinians and speed up final status negotiations to complete them within six months.

"If the Palestinians trust this, it is their decision. But I don't think final status talks can be completed in six months at all," he said.

"Also how can they go straight into final status when there is building at Jabal Abu Ghneim?" he said.

Talks have been put on hold by the current leap in tensions.

The Palestinians initially refused Mr. Netanyahu's proposal for speed-up talks on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza, but now say they must study it.

Libya defies embargo again

JEDDAH (AFP) — Libya said Saturday it has violated the U.N. air traffic embargo again to fly its pilgrims to Islam's holiest sites in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on board a Libyan Arab Airways plane.

A Libyan diplomat in Saudi Arabia said the plane arrived Friday night in Jeddah, on the Red Sea coast near Mecca, in defiance of the embargo. It carried 105 pilgrims, including members of an official delegation.

The plane returned to Tripoli on Saturday after "the Saudi authorities provided all the necessary help for the passengers and the aircraft," said the diplomat, asking not to be named.

It was the latest in a string of violations since 1995 of the U.N. ban on foreign air links with Libya, including previous flights for the annual Hajj pilgrimage and visits abroad by Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi.

More Libyan Muslims are to be flown to Mecca, where this year's Hajj is to take place April 10-17. Libya's official news agency IANA said. It did not specify if the national carrier would be used to ferry the pilgrims.

The air embargo and other sanctions have been in force since 1992 following Libya's refusal to hand over two of its nationals wanted in the West in connection with the 1988 Lockerbie plane bombing that killed 270 people.

Under a U.N. exemption, the national carrier Egypt Air is to fly 11,000 pilgrims from Libya to Mecca for the third year running, officials at Cairo airport said Wednesday.

Egypt Air has chartered a total of 45 flights to fly the Libyan pilgrims, a spokesman for Cairo airport told reporters. "The first flight will leave from Tripoli on Friday."

Arab fund says Iraq promised to pay debt

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Iraq has promised a key regional fund to pay back its outstanding debt that has combined with defaults by other members to hurt the fund's lending activity, its chairman said on Saturday.

The Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), a regional international Monetary Fund (IMF)-style institution, has made contacts with sanctions-hit Iraq to recover arrears which have accumulated from loans in the past decade, Jassim Al Manai said.

"Iraq is one of the members which has defaulted on repaying their debts. We have made contacts with Iraqi officials, who said they cannot pay back to the fund or other creditors so long as Iraq's funds are frozen," Mr. Manai told the United Arab Emirates economic weekly Emirates Today.

"But Iraq acknowledges the debt and Iraqi officials have assured U.S. on more than one occasion that they will pay once the embargo is removed."

Mr. Manai, a Bahraini, provided no figures on Iraq's arrears but a recent AMF report put them at around \$292 million at the end of 1995. The debt includes the principal loans, interest and outstanding interest.

The two other defaulters are Sudan, which owes around \$267 million, and Somalia, with a debt of \$130 million.

AMF officials said they saw no imminent solution to the problem as Iraq is still reeling under crippling sanctions imposed by the United Nations to punish Baghdad for its 1990 invasion of neighbouring Kuwait.

The U.N. has permitted Iraq to export limited quantities of oil to buy food and medicine for its people but its overseas assets remain frozen.

Sudan's coffers have also been sapped by 13 years of civil strife while Somalia, another impoverished east African country, has been divided and is still suffering from hostilities.

AMF officials have complained that the arrears have hurt the fund's lending operations as they account for more than half its capital of around \$1.3 billion. This has forced them to focus more on technical assistance.

The AMF was set by the 22-member Arab League in Abu Dhabi 20 years ago with the primary aim of tackling balance of payments deficits in member states by providing soft loans. Such loans have exceeded \$2.5 billion.

Israel's treasury director backs 'unity' government

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's outgoing Treasury Director-General said on Saturday that a "national unity" government composed of the ruling Likud and the main opposition Labour Party would be good for Israel.

"For the economy, it is good," David Brodet, who leaves his post at the end of March, told Israel's army radio when asked for his opinion on such a government.

"That is to say, without entering into other political considerations, it is good for the economy because it creates a larger, better political, parliamentary base and it is possible perhaps to pass better (economic) steps assuming that is part of the government's agenda."

Mr. Brodet said the Middle East peace process was vital but cautioned against making too much of a current crisis. "I do not see any substitute for peace but on the other hand it must be remembered that it is a process and in a process there are ups and downs... if there would be a stop of the process I would be very sorry," he said.

Israel media last week speculated Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu might seek to form a "national unity" government to lift pressure directed at him by his current far-right coalition partners over Middle East peace negotiations.

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Sudan extends general mobilisation

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's National Defence Council has extended the general mobilisation of all sectors of the Sudanese people to face up to the aggression, state television said.

"No matter from where the aggression comes — from the remote border areas in the east, or deep in the south, the people had rallied and will always be in full alert to defy and repulse the aggression," it added.

Sudan says neighbours Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda are fighting with the rebels who want to overthrow the government. All three countries deny the charges.

The military campaign against the government

shifted earlier this month to the far south, where the rebels captured the town of Yei and began to advance towards the town of Juba, the largest in the whole of the south.

Northern rebels of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) attacked the army on the Sudanese side of the Eritrean border in January but the offensive failed to win much territory.

Rebel units further south, led by the southern-based Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), captured the Sudanese towns of Kurmuk and Qeissan on the Ethiopian border in an attack coordinated with that of the northerners.

Peruvians' Easter procession becomes pro-hostage march

LIMA (R) — Thousands of Peruvians marched on Friday in an Easter procession devoted to hostages held by Marxist rebels for more than 100 days, as the 72 captives ate traditional fish meals and listened to radio messages from their families.

"In the name of God, when are you going to free our brothers — the hostages?" Monsignor Miguel Irizar, who presided over the way of the cross procession in the nearby port of Callao, asked the rebels.

The hostages spent Christmas and New Year's at the Japanese ambassador's house. On Friday, they began their third holiday period in captivity eating fish and listening to messages from their next of kin on the radio — their only direct contact with the outside world.

"With great affection Nandito, we hope that in this holy week the Lord hears our prayers so that this moment passes soon," said one relative who, like others, used a nickname so as not to identify the hostage.

"I know that you have great strength," the message continued. "This Good Friday all our children are here. I love you. Take care of yourself. Goodbye my dear."

Among the 72 men are cabinet ministers, generals, businessmen, the ambassadors of Bolivia and Japan, the brother of Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori and some two dozen other Japanese nationals.

Meanwhile, negotiations between Mr. Fujimori's government and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) rebels moved back and forth all week between optimism and doubt.

On Friday, hours after Mr. Fujimori said things were looking up, Japan's Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, said in Tokyo: "I am not optimistic." He did not elaborate.

The MRTA also sent mixed signals, fluctuating from displays of flexibility to warnings that all their 450 jailed comrades must be released before they free any more hostages.

Early on Saturday, rebels went to the residence's roof and placed a banner saying: "We shall defend with our lives the freedom of our jailed (comrades)."

The recent signs of flexibility on both sides, including reports that the rebels were ready to accept a Cuban offer of political asylum, sent diplomatic and media circles into an optimistic mood.

Government and rebels had not met directly since March 12, but were believed to be nearing agreement on some points of a proposal put forward by a three-man guarantors team overseeing negotiations.

Talks between negotiator Domingo Palermo and MRTA leader Nestor Cerna were expected to resume Monday or Tuesday.

DI 'fan' found dead

DUBLIN (AFP) — An Irishman whose obsessive admiration for Princess Diana drove him to break into Kensington Palace grounds twice in 1996, was found dead on a beach in western Ireland. The body of Liam Whitney was discovered on Friday by a farmer near the village of Oranmore. Police said a post-mortem was being carried out. Whitney was believed to have drowned. The dead man, who was single and unemployed, was arrested in May and in August 1996 for having climbed into the grounds of Kensington Palace, Diana's London residence, at night. The first time, he managed to sneak to within 30 metres of the princess's apartments and knocked on a window. In August, he climbed over a fence and set off an alarm before being overpowered.

Albright practises throwing baseball

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, has been practicing throwing a baseball recently to prepare for the U.S. baseball season's opening day in nearby Baltimore, Maryland. Albright, 59, will throw out the first pitch Tuesday to start the season. President Bill Clinton usually throws out the first pitch but had to bow out this year because of his injured knee. "She wants to make sure she has a good fast ball to put across the plate," a State Department spokesman said. "She must improve her aim."

Kohl's son 'to marry Turk'

ANKARA (AFP) — One of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's sons, Peter, plans to marry a Turkish woman, but may run into opposition from the bride's father, two Turkish dailies reported. However, the reports were swiftly denied by the government press office in Bonn where a spokesman said the couple were just friends. Peter Kohl, 32, met 29-year-old Elif Sozen eight years ago when both were students at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston. According to the papers, Hurriyet and Milliyet, the couple got engaged last year and have already begun arrangements for the wedding. They currently live in London, but are planning to live in Turkey after their nuptials, the papers said. But Elif's father Kemal Sozen, director of an industrial plant in Turkey, is said to be known for his conservatism and would be against his daughter marrying a non-Muslim, said Hurriyet. "They are not engaged. Our family will have to reflect if there is such a plan," the paper cited Kemal Sozen as saying.

French pretender undergoes surgery

PARIS (AFP) — Le Comte de Paris, the 89-year-old pretender to the French throne, is convalescing in a Swiss clinic after undergoing surgery described by his family as "serious." No details of the operation have been released, but the news is bound to worry those loyal to the French royal line. The count is heir to the last French king, Louis-Philippe, who abdicated in 1848. The eccentric ageing count — Henri D'Orleans — is a direct descendant of Hugue Capet, founder of France's 1,000-year-old Capetian Dynasty. Viewed in France as an entertaining but anachronistic irrelevance, he once claimed that president Charles de Gaulle had suggested he succeed him as head of state in 1965.

Strasbourg stages anti-racist rally

STRASBOURG (AFP) — National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen on Saturday threw down the gauntlet to socialist-ruled Strasbourg as tens of thousands marched in unprecedented numbers against his far-right party.

Mr. Le Pen told reporters as he arrived for a three-day conference that he felt "at home" in Strasbourg, the seat of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe.

Justifying his decision to hold the party conference in Strasbourg Mr. Le Pen said: "We feel fine here, as we do in Rennes, Lille or Marseille."

"If the French really knew what we believe, we would have the majority, like in Vitrolles," said Mr. Le Pen, referring to the southern French town which the anti-immigration National Front seized from the left in a

municipal election last month.

City Mayor Catherine Trautmann branded his choice of Strasbourg as a "provocation."

She was among the marchers at Saturday's protest, organised by left-wing parties and anti-racist associations, also attended by Socialist Party leader Lionel Jospin and Communist Party Chief Robert Hue.

Mr. Jospin called the march, which according to police numbered 30,000 participants, "a people's victory."

Organisers had hoped for up to 30,000 marchers which would represent the highest anti-National Front protest since the same number took to the streets in Paris in May 1995.

The marchers, including family groups, set off under

cloudy skies in a party atmosphere on their eight-kilometre route on Saturday afternoon just as the National Front conference opened amid night security.

At the demonstration's head was a huge white banner bearing the words "justice and freedom" in red.

Mr. Hue told journalists he wanted to demonstrate "our opposition to the monstrous themes of Le Pen and to say that there is also a France of solidarity, a France of respect for human dignity."

British-born actress Jane Birkin said: "I must be here and nowhere else. We must press on against the FN (National Front)."

A group of about 100 British supporters of the anti-Nazi League from London and Norwich, in southeastern England, were among protesters who were bussed to the demonstration.

Mr. Le Pen, who campaigns on a strongly anti-immigrant platform and is threatening the deportation of the country's three million mainly North African immigrants, obtained 25 per cent of the vote in Alsace during last year's presidential election.

His party, which now claims the support of 15 per cent of the electorate, is riding a wave of popular discontent amid record post-war unemployment levels and dissatisfaction with traditional political parties hit by party-financing scandals.

The National Front hopes to establish itself as an alternative mainstream political party for next year's legislative elections during the current party congress. The party is not represented in the national legislature.